

**FREE FROM THE DOMAIN OF DARKNESS
(COLOSSIANS 1.13-20)**

ONCE MY FAMILY AND I TOOK A TOUR THROUGH A CAVE. THE TOUR GUIDE POINTED OUT ALL THE STALAGMITES, STALACTITES AND VARIOUS WONDERS OF THAT ROCKY WORLD DEEP BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH. BEFORE HE LED US BACK TO THE SURFACE, HE SAID TO US, "DON'T BE ALARMED NOW. I AM GOING TO TURN OUT ALL THE LIGHTS JUST FOR A MINUTE." CLICK. THEN HE SAID TO US, "THIS IS TOTAL DARKNESS. IF YOU REMAINED IN IT FOR AN HOUR, YOU WOULD BEGIN TO GO INSANE." WHEN WE RETURNED TO THE SURFACE, WE ALL BREATHED A SIGN OF RELIEF. DARKNESS IS GOOD FOR SLEEPING, BUT TOTAL DARKNESS IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

THERE IS ANOTHER KIND OF TOTAL DARKNESS WHICH IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH. PAUL THE APOSTLE REFERS TO IT IN HIS LETTER TO THE

COLOSSIANS: **HE HAS DELIVERED US FROM THE DOMAIN OF DARKNESS AND TRANSFERRED US TO THE KINGDOM OF HIS BELOVED SON.** THIS DARKNESS IS CALLED SIN AND DEATH INTO WHICH WE ARE BORN. THIS DARKNESS IS OUR INHERITANCE WE RECEIVE FROM THE DISOBEDIENCE OF OUR FIRST PARENTS IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN. IF WE REMAIN IN THAT DARKNESS WE STAND CONDEMNED TO HELL, FOR IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR SIN AND DEATH TO EXIST IN HEAVEN. GOD CANNOT ABIDE IT. THAT IS THE LAW. "HUMAN NATURE HAS BEEN DELIVERED INTO SLAVERY AND IS HELD CAPTIVE BY THE DEVIL" (APOLOGIA)

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO? HOW ARE WE GOING TO SHUCK OFF THIS DARKNESS OF SIN AND DEATH? WOE ARE WE? EVEN IF WE SEEK AN ANSWER FROM SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY OR SOME OTHER HUMAN WISDOM, WE FAIL. THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES WE REMAIN IN SIN AND DIE ETERNALLY. WE

HAVE TO FACE IT: THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO. THAT IS THE LAW.

AS WE LOOK INTO SCRIPTURE, HOWEVER, WE BEGIN TO SEE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL. IT IS NOT THE LAW; IT IS THE GOSPEL, THE GOOD NEWS OF OUR SALVATION. WE HAVE BEEN TAKEN OUT OF THE DOMAIN OF DARKNESS, AS PAUL CALLS IT, INTO THE KINGDOM OF HIS BELOVED SON. WE HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO HEAVEN EVEN THOUGH WE HAVEN'T YET ARRIVED IN THAT ETERNAL DWELLING PLACE. WE ARE THERE ON A PROMISE. **IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY DWELLING PLACES. IF IT WERE NOT SO, WOULD I NOT HAVE TOLD YOU THAT I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU? AND IF I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU, I WILL COME AGAIN AND WILL TAKE YOU TO MYSELF THAT WHERE I AM YOU MAY ALSO BE** (JOHN 14.2-3). JESUS CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS TO ATONE FOR THEM. "IN VERY DEED DID HE ENDURE FOR OUR SAKES SORROW, IGNOMINY,

TORMENT, EVEN DEATH ITSELF, AND BURIAL" (ALEXANDER OF ALEXANDRIA). WE HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED THROUGH FAITH WHEN THE WATER OF BAPTISM, CLEANSSED US. "THE BEGINNING OF GOD'S KINGDOM IS THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS" (LSB).

WE SINNERS ARE SHRIVEN.
LONG SINCE FORGIVEN;
BY HIS SUFFERING SON REDEEMED,
IN HIS FATHER'S EYES ESTEEMED.

HE HAS TRANSFERRED US FROM THAT DARK CAVE UNDERGROUND TO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

ALL THIS JESUS CHRIST HAS DONE FOR US WHOM HE LOVES. LET'S TAKE A SECOND LOOK AT THE OLD TESTAMENT READING FOR TODAY, THE ONE FROM MALACHI THE PROPHET. THE PEOPLE TO WHOM HE MINISTERED DID NOT LOVE THE LORD WHO LOVED THEM VERY MUCH. IT WAS AS IF THEY TOLD HIM, "SO YOU LOVE US. BIG DEAL." DO WE, WHOM THE LORD JESUS LOVED AND LOVES TODAY, LOVE HIM IN RETURN? OR DO WE DESPISE HIM 2

WHO TREASURES AND CHERISHES US?
LOVING JESUS MAY NOT ALWAYS BE A
FEELING. MOST OF THE TIME IT IS AN
ACTION. LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR NEXT
DOOR, LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR IN SAMOA
OR SOME PLACE IN SOUTH AMERICA,
WHEREVER, LOVE YOUR FELLOW
CHRISTIANS, LOVE THE MUSLIMS. **WE
LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US** (I
JN 4.19). LOVE YOUR FELLOW HUMAN
BEINGS, AND YOU LOVE JESUS.

WHEN PAUL WAS WRITING TO THE
COLOSSIANS, I THINK HE THOUGHT
THEY NEEDED TO TAKE A GOOD SOLID
LOOK AT JESUS AS IF THEY HAD
PROBABLY BEEN TAKING THEIR SAVIOR
FOR GRANTED. HE POINTS OUT TO
THEM THAT JESUS IS PREEMINENT, THAT
IS, ABOVE—WAY ABOVE—ALL OTHER
THINGS AND PEOPLE—PAST, PRESENT
AND FUTURE. HE SAYS, **HE IS THE
IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD, THE
FIRST BORN OF ALL CREATION.**

A WORLD WAR I AIRMAN ONCE
WROTE:

IT IS CHRIST WHO BETTER THAN AIRMEN
WINGS HIS FLIGHT
HOLDING THE RECORD OF THE WORLD
FOR HEIGHT (APOLLINAIRE).

HOW TRUE. HE IS INCARNATE, MADE
VISIBLE TO US AS FLESH AND BONES.
GOD IS THREE PERSONED—FATHER,
SON AND HOLY SPIRIT, AND JESUS IS
THE SON MADE VISIBLE TO US BECAUSE
WE COULD NOT SEE HIM AS SPIRIT.
“ADAM LOST THE IMAGE OF GOD, BUT IN
JESUS, THE SECOND ADAM, GOD’S
IMAGE IS RESTORED” (APOLOGIA). HE
IS OUR GOD AND AS GOD HE IS OUR
SAVIO

PAUL SAYS, **FOR BY HIM ALL
THINGS WERE CREATED, IN HEAVEN
AND ON EARTH, VISIBLE AND
INVISIBLE . . . ALL THINGS CREATED
THROUGH HIM AND FOR HIM.** HE IS GOD
AND THEREFORE OUR CREATOR. PAUL
SAYS, **AND HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS,
AND IN HIM ALL THINGS HOLD
TOGETHER.** LOOK UP AT THE SKIES AT
NIGHT, AT THE GALAXIES.
ASTRONOMERS AND

COSMOLOGISTS MARVEL THAT ANYTHING OF THAT IMMENSITY DOESN'T FLY APART INTO THE DEPTHS OF SPACE. HERE'S THE ANSWER: JESUS HOLDS THE STARS AND PLANETS TOGETHER. PAUL SAYS, **AND HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH.** DON'T YOU WONDER SOMETIMES ABOUT THE CHURCH—LOCALLY, NATIONALLY AND THROUGHOUT THE WIDE WORLD? DON'T WONDER, AND DON'T WORRY EITHER. THE CHURCH HAS ALWAYS BEEN FRAUGHT WITH PROBLEMS, BUT IT CONTINUES TO BE THE CHURCH BECAUSE JESUS IS IN CHARGE OF THE CHURCH. HE HEADS IT UP. IT WILL PREVAIL UNTIL WE ALL ARE TRANSFERRED BY THE RESURRECTION INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

HOW FORTUNATE WE ARE WITH OUR SAVIOR WHO IS THE BEGINNING, THE FIRSTBORN FROM DEATH "SINCE HE INITIATED THE RESURRECTION" (OECUMENIUS, ALT.), ETERNALLY PREEMINENT, FULLY GOD,

THE RECONCILER, THE PEACEMAKER BY HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS. THIS PREEMINENT JESUS IN MERCY LOOKED UPON US IN COMPASSION AS WE DWELLED IN THE TOTAL DARKNESS OF SIN AND DEATH AND DIED FOR US, LOVING US, THAT WE MIGHT LIVE. FOREVER. PRAISED BE JESUS CHRIST. AMEN.