

Reasons To Be Thankful

Colossians 1:12-14

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What I like to do often is to get the context of a passage, so I want to back up and read starting at Colossians 1:9. What you have in verses 9-14 is Paul praying for the believers in Colosse. This is one of his well-known prison prayers.

Paul says, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you.” Paul had gotten a report about the good things that were going on with the believers in Colosse. “...and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy.”

Now our text, starting in verse 12: “...giving thanks to the Father...”—this is our theme—“... who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom...”—that is, “Christ”—“...we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

I want you to notice in verse 12, Paul says, “giving thanks to the Father.” Someone once said—and I believe it’s true—that the characteristic of the Spirit-filled Christian life is thankfulness. The chief characteristic of the Spirit-filled life is a thankful heart. If you’re not thankful, it’s an evident sign that you’re not being filled or controlled by the Holy Spirit. It is one of the outpourings of the Spirit, a thankful heart.

Remember that Paul is writing these words while he was in prison. Yet his heart is overflowing with thanksgiving to the Lord.

Paul starts out with prayer, verse 9. He prayed that they might be “filled with the knowledge of His will.” That’s a summary of the prayer of petition. In verse 10, he prayed that they would “walk worthy of the Lord,” that they would live their Christian life in a way that honors and glorifies God. In verse 11, he prayed that they would be “strengthened with all might,” in the inner person. He prayed that the power of the Holy Spirit would strengthen them.

So Paul prayed for three things: that they might know God’s will, that they might walk and live in God’s will and that they might have the strength and power of the Holy Spirit to live out the will of God in their lives.

Now, in verse 12, Paul says, “...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”

So we see that Paul moves from praying to praising. He moves from petitioning God for the

believers in Colosse to thanking God for the blessings they possessed. How marvelous that is. So the outpouring of the Spirit-filled life is a thankful heart.

I want to give you a sampling of thanksgiving we find in Colossians. In Colossians 2:7, Paul says, "...abounding in it with thanksgiving." In chapter 3, verse 17, he says, "...giving thanks to God the Father through Him." In chapter 4, verse 2, he says, "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving."

Now I want you to notice the phrases we have in Colossians 1:12-14 that give us an indication of the things he is thanking God for. In verse 12, we have "who has qualified us"; in verse 13, it says, "He has delivered us...and conveyed us"; and in verse 14, "in whom we have redemption." So we have "has...has...has...and have." So Paul is telling us the things we have as believers.

One of the things that so encourages me in this section is that Paul lists four blessings that are true of every Christian. I don't know if you realize how important that statement is. These are blessings that are guaranteed that every Christian has. In the kingdom of God, there are no second-class citizens. You don't have some who have the blessings, "super saints" who have more blessings and some "bad saints" who have little blessings. These are all the blessings that belong to all the saints who are in Christ; no one is shortchanged.

So the glorious truth is that these blessings are true for all Christians. If you are a Christian, you have these blessings. It is evident that you have these blessings, because you are positionally in Christ.

And I love this concept that they are true of every Christian. These blessings come from God the Father, because of the work of God the Son and they are given to us by the work of God the Holy Spirit. So the blessings are from the Triune God: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Now there are four blessings that every Christian should be thankful to God for. And if you have struggled with thankfulness, with being thankful for God's blessings, write them down. I want you to do an experiment. For the next two weeks, I want you to thank God for these blessings.

Blessing number one for every Christian is that God has "qualified us." Verse 12 says, "giving thanks to the Father." Notice who Paul is giving thanks to: "the Father." Why? Because He is "from whom all blessings flow." I like that benediction. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." So He is "the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." From Him, all blessings flow, so we are giving thanks to God. We're headed to Thanksgiving in a few weeks, and we should begin to be thankful for the blessings of God.

I don't know who unbelievers are thankful to. They're not Christians, but even atheists celebrate Thanksgiving. Who do they give "thanks" to? Their "lucky stars"? If they're not thanking God, "from whom all blessings flow," then I wonder who they're really giving thanks to.

Verse 12 also says, "...who has..."—this is a blessing we have—"...qualified us..."—or "made

us fit”—“...to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” So the moment we were born again, we were “qualified” for heaven.

This is what's called “our position in Christ.” It's not talking about our practice; it's talking about being qualified for heaven. And it's not because we are living a “perfect” life; it's because we're in Christ, and His righteousness is imputed to us. In Him we are forgiven and complete. So the moment you are born again, you don't have to progress or grow or become “more spiritual” to have these blessings. You are “qualified” or “made fit” for heaven.

This is what we call “justification.” It is the act of God by which He declares the believing sinner to be righteous, based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. This is not progressive; it is instantaneous. The moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you are justified or declared righteous, which means you are fit for heaven.

The reason this is important is because there are a lot of Christians who lack assurance. They've been forgiven, been saved, they're going to heaven, but they don't really believe they are. Because they're not perfect and they make mistakes, they don't think they're saved. Satan comes to convict them and accuse them, and it confuses them. “You're not fit for heaven! You think you're a Christian? Look at what you just said, what you just thought, what you just did!” Our hearts convict us, but God is greater than our hearts.

Romans 8:1 says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” And every believer is “in Christ,” so there is “no condemnation,” and we are “qualified” or “fit” to go to heaven. We might not think we're fit, but we are fit to go to heaven. It means that the moment you were born again, you were “fit” or “qualified” to go to heaven.

I watched a YouTube video of a Catholic priest trying to explain purgatory. He talked for half an hour but didn't quote one Scripture. The reason is because purgatory is not in the Bible. And what he said was that even as Christians, when we die, many times we're not ready or fit or qualified to go to heaven. He said we need more purging or preparation or things that need to take place in our lives. We haven't progressed along far enough.

Their belief in purgatory is evidence that Roman Catholicism confuses justification with sanctification. They think they are one and the same. They don't understand positional righteousness, that we are justified in Christ and in Christ alone. So they believe we have to be purged of our sins and prepared to go to heaven, so we go to purgatory first. But that's not what the Bible teaches.

One of the great illustrations that there is no purgatory is the thief on the cross. When Jesus was dying on the Cross, He was hanging between two thieves. One of the thieves had a change of heart and turned to Jesus and said, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” Jesus didn't say to him, “Sorry; you're not fit. Sorry; you haven't been baptized. Sorry; you're not religious enough. Sorry; you're a sinful, wicked man.” No. He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

So we don't have to be qualified based on our own efforts. Jesus imputes to us His righteousness. Every morning when you wake up, remind yourself, "I am fit for heaven. I'm qualified. I'm ready to go to heaven."

And it's God the Father who qualifies us. In the Greek grammar of this statement, verse 12, it indicates that it is God who qualifies us or fits us for heaven. That's a glorious truth.

Notice the phrase used in verse 12: "to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light." That's a fancy way of saying that you are going to heaven. We're not there yet, but we're on our way. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also," John 14:2-3.

I like what R. Kent Hughes said. He said, "One day we will pass beyond the stars. And when they have burned themselves out, we will shine even brighter." How true. So every morning when you wake up, tell yourself, "I am fit for heaven. I am bound for the Promised Land."

Blessing number two is He has "delivered us," verse 13. It says, "He has delivered us..."—from what?—"...from the power of darkness." That means delivered from Satan's grip and from Satan's kingdom. The verb "delivered" was used only of God in the New Testament. This is a work of God. You can't deliver yourself. You can't "pull yourself up by your own boot straps." So deliverance is God saving us or rescuing us. I like to think of salvation as God's "rescue mission."

Man's greatest need or problem is sin. This is a problem that no scientist, no philosopher, no educator and no politician can solve. Every two years around election time, I get so weary of all the rhetoric from all the political pundits. Our big problem is sin, so we need some Bible-believing Christians to lead our nation. We need to come back to God and back to His Word.

The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. "The heart is deceitful...and desperately wicked." Only God can rescue us and deliver us from sin and from Satan.

Notice that Paul uses the phrase, "the power of darkness," in verse 13. In Ephesians 2, he describes our preconverted state as being "dead in trespasses and sins," that we were "the sons of disobedience," we were depraved and "children of wrath. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us," sent His Son to save us. "For by grace you have been saved..."—or "rescued"—"...through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." So it is God who delivers us. He saves us from sin's penalty and from sin's power.

So the first thing we're thankful for is that God has "qualified us." The second thing we are thankful for is God has "delivered us." And now the third thing we are thankful for is that God has "translated us" or "conveyed us." He has transferred us. Verse 13 says, "He has... conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." So He has qualified us, He delivers us and then He transforms us and translates us into His kingdom. Not only has God "delivered us"

from Satan's kingdom of darkness, He has also "translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."

When Jesus was being baptized by John the Baptist at the Jordan River, the heavens opened over Him and the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descended on Him, and the Father spoke audibly from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," or literally, "in whom My soul delights." Jesus is His "beloved Son."

Before conversion, we live in Satan's kingdom of darkness. Then upon conversion, we are transferred or translated into "the kingdom of the Son of His love."

This word "translated" or "transferred" was used to describe a portion of a population moving from one country to another. When a king would conquer a people, he would deport them out of their country and transfer them to another country. That's how this phrase was used. So God takes us out of Satan's kingdom and translates us or transfers us into the kingdom of His Son.

And this happens at the moment of our salvation, at the moment of our conversion. It is true of every Christian. We don't have to "grow" into salvation. We don't have to "progress" into salvation. You don't have to "psych" yourself into it. God takes you out of darkness and transfers you into the kingdom of light and of the love of His dear Son.

We live in God's kingdom now, and we will live in His kingdom of heaven in the future. When Christ returns, for 1,000 years there will be the reign of Christ on earth. And we will be with Him. It's going to be awesome. Then there will be "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." And we will be there. All that we see here is temporary; it will pass away. "But the things that are not seen are eternal." So like Abraham, we live for "the city... whose builder and maker is God." What a blessing that truly is.

Blessing number four is God has redeemed us, verse 14. "...in whom..."—that is, "Jesus Christ"—"...we have redemption, through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Notice it says, "we have." Not hope to have, not maybe have, not might have, not if we're lucky we have, not if we work hard we'll have.

So we've been qualified for heaven, verse 12; we've been delivered from Satan's kingdom, verse 13; we've been transferred into the kingdom of His Son, verse 13; and now as slaves, we have been redeemed by His blood and set free. What a marvelous truth that is. The word "redeemed" means "to buy and set free."

Redemption is the central theme of the entire Bible. If you don't understand redemption, you don't understand the Bible. God redeems us. It started in the Fall when God killed an animal to cover man's sin. When we get to heaven, the theme of the song there will be redemption. We will be worshipping Christ our Redeemer.

Someone said, "Cut the Bible anywhere and it bleeds; it's red with redemptive truth." It's the

scarlet thread that runs all through Scripture. It's the main theme of Scripture. This is why Paul comes to the conclusion of giving thanks: for the redemption we have in Christ Jesus.

Let me break down redemption for you and give you five facts about it. Number one, our redemption is in Christ. Verse 14 says, "in whom." The only place to be redeemed is in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Not only did Jesus say He was "the way, the truth and the life," He wanted to make it clear by then stating that no one gets to heaven, no one can get to the Father except by Jesus. There is only one Redeemer, and that is Jesus Christ. So He came into the world to save us and redeem us from our sins. Christ is the Redeemer.

Number two, notice redemption's certainty. Verse 14 says, "we have." So "in whom..."—that is, "Christ"—we have." It's not hope to have, maybe have, might have, but "we have." John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have..."—not hope to have or might have—"...everlasting life."

Eternal life is a present possession; a Christian has eternal life now. Not hope to have, not if I'm lucky I'll have, not if I'm really good and work really hard, maybe God will let me in heaven. You have eternal life. It is really one of the great verses of assurance for the believer. If we believe in Him, we will not perish but we'll have everlasting life. That's the doctrine of assurance. It's so marvelous to realize that I'm redeemed and that it is sure.

Number three is the meaning of redemption. Verse 14 says, "in whom we have redemption." The definition of "redemption" is "to purchase and set free by paying a price." The Roman world was glutted with slavery. One out of every four individuals was a slave. There were more slaves than free men. If you wanted a slave, you'd go to the slave market. You would buy a slave and that slave became your property. As owner of the slave, you could grant that slave their freedom. You bought them and then let them go, or you "redeemed" them.

So redemption is the picture of us being slaves to sin, but God sent His Son to shed His blood—that's the price of our redemption—to buy us out of the "slave market" of sin and to set us free. We were created by God, we fell, we've been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and we belong to Him.

Blessing number four about redemption is that it comes to us through His blood, verse 14. That is a reference to the Cross of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:7 says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." So the price of our redemption as believers was the blood of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:18-19 says that we were "not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

What it took to buy you from sin and darkness and out of slavery was the blood of God's own dear Son. When the Bible speaks of the blood of His Son, it is referring to the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross and His entire, substitutionary work. When Jesus died on the Cross, He

uttered the word “Tatelestai.” It means “It is finished” or “Paid in full.” Other religions say “do” but Christianity says “done.” We enter into the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. That is the price of our redemption: He died and shed His own blood to forgive us. So Jesus is our Passover Lamb.

The fifth blessing that comes from redemption, verse 14, is its result: “the forgiveness of sins.” What a marvelous verse this is. “...in whom...”—that is, “Jesus Christ”—“...we have...”—present possession—“...redemption...”—we’ve been bought—“...through His blood...”—the purchase price, which results in—“...the forgiveness of sins.”

Oh, what joy there is in knowing that your sins are forgiven! It is only found in the person of Jesus Christ.

The word “forgiveness” literally means “to send away.” In Psalm 103:12, it says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” It’s kind of cool that when you travel east and keep going in that direction, you’ll still be going east. When you travel west and keep going west, you’ll still be going west. And “Never the twain shall meet.” He has taken our sins from us.

Have you experienced the joy of forgiven sins? Or are you still living with the guilt, the shame and a blackened heart that God needs to wash and make clean? Our sins can be forgiven. They can be carried away.

Again, when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to be baptized at the Jordan, John said, “Behold!” or “Look!” “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” I like that.

In the Old Testament, they had what is called “the scapegoat.” That word comes from the Bible. It was a goat that the priest would lay his hands on, and he would confess his sin and the sin of his people and symbolically transfer his and his people’s sin to the goat. Then the goat was released to go running off over the distant hills. As they watched the goat disappear over the hills, it was a reminder to them that their sins had been carried away.

I don’t know what they did the next morning when they opened their front door and the goat had come back. You may not have a goat that returns, but you certainly have the devil coming to your house. The devil will tell you, “You think you’re forgiven? You think God’s washed and cleansed you? Oh, no; you’re a sinner! You’re not fit for heaven. You’re not a child of God.”

Then what a blessing it is to remind yourself, “My sins have been forgiven! They’ve been carried away by the blood of Jesus Christ! I am forgiven!”

So in light of all these blessings, here are my questions to you. Have you been qualified for heaven through Christ? Have you been delivered? Have you been transferred into His kingdom? Are you redeemed? Are you forgiven? Are you washed in the blood of Christ? Do you know that if you died today, you would go to heaven? Are you fit for heaven?

You say, "Well, I'm trying. I've been baptized. I'm trying to be a good person. I read my Bible. I go to church."

That's not it. Have you reached out and trusted Christ as your Savior? Have you trusted in Him who died for you to redeem you by His blood?

You may say, "I don't know. I'm not sure. I don't know that when I die, I'll go to heaven."

There are three things you need to do. Number one, realize you're a sinner. The Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one...All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Number two, you need to repent of your sins. That means you change your mind and your direction. The Greek word for "repent" is "metanoia." You turn around and follow Jesus Christ. Number three, you receive Him.

So you realize that you're a sinner. "The wages of sin is death," the Bible says. But Jesus died for you on the Cross. You repent of your sins, and then you receive Him. The Bible says, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right..."—the "power," the "authority"—"...to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."

If you died right now, would you go to heaven? If you say, "I hope so," that's not good enough. You can know beyond any doubt that your sins are forgiven, that you're qualified for heaven. You can be delivered and transferred into God's kingdom, become a child of God with eternal life, have your sins forgiven and then know you're on your way to heaven.

So you must trust Him and open your heart and receive Him today.