

Thankful for the Cross

Colossians 1:12-14

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My text is Colossians 1:12-14, but in order to see it in context, I want to read verses 9-14. This is Paul the apostle's prayer. "For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will..." that's the first petition "...in all wisdom and spiritual understanding..." and here's the second petition "...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; giving thanks to the Father 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 we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

What are you thankful for? Your husband? Your wife? Your kids and grandkids? Your friends? Your food? Praise God! There are so many things we could be thankful for. But as Christians, as children of God, one of the primary things we should be thankful for is our salvation. And that's what Paul focuses on in verses 12-14. He gives us the reasons we should be thankful to God.

Paul said in Philippians 4:6, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." Colossians 4:2 says, "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving." And Colossians 3:17 says, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." So one of the greatest indications that you are filled with the Spirit, that you are a child of God, is that you overflow with thanksgiving.

In Colossians 2:6-7, Paul says, "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it..." or "overflowing" "...with thanksgiving." So our lives are like a river, to be overflowing and "abounding...with thanksgiving."

In our text, Paul is first asking for the petitions, verses 9-10, which are to know God's will and "walk worthy of the Lord." And then he simply turns to prayer. Prayer should have those two elements: petition, which is asking God for something; and praise, which is thanking God for what He has already given us. We don't want simply to ask; we want to ask and then say "Thank you, Lord, for what You have given me."

I think one of the crucial needs of Christians today is that we know what is ours in Christ, and that we are humbly grateful and thankful to God for the blessings that we all possess.

There are three blessings I want to point out that every Christian should be thankful for. These are true of all Christians. Number one is that we should be thankful "to the Father who has

qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light," verse 12. This speaks of an intimate relationship with God as our Father, because we are His children.

Verse 12 says "has qualified us"; verse 13 says "has delivered us" and "conveyed us"; and verse 14 says "We have redemption." So this is what we already have in Jesus. We're not asking God to give it to us. Many times Christians ask for things they already have. We already have these, so thank God for them and enjoy them. As a child of God, you have these.

What does it mean that He has "qualified us"? It literally means that He has made us fit for heaven. The moment you believe in Jesus Christ, that you trust Him as your Savior, you are made fit or are qualified to go to heaven.

This is called our "position" or "standing" in Christ. It is not our practice. Our position in Christ is called "justification." It is the act of God whereby He declares the believer to be righteous. He bases it on the Cross, on the finished work of Jesus Christ. That is our position. All Christians have the same position in Jesus Christ; perfectly righteous in Jesus Christ. It's not progressive; it doesn't grow or change. You can't be more righteous than the moment you trusted Christ.

And the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. It's called "the doctrine of imputation." It means that Christ's righteousness is put in your account. His righteous robes have been placed upon you. So when God the Father looks at you, He sees the righteousness of Christ. He doesn't see our sin. He doesn't see our shortcomings. He doesn't see our failures. He sees Christ, because we are in Him. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

When the thief was hanging on the cross next to Jesus, and after reviling the other thief, the first thief said, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." We would basically say, "O Lord, he's been a thief, a bad person! He's not fit to go to heaven!" But Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be..." not maybe "...with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:42-43). Isn't that awesome?! What joy must have come into the heart of that thief as he hung on the cross. "I'm going to heaven!" He probably turned to the other thief and said, "How about you?! You're crazy if you aren't!"

When we take communion and we eat the bread and drink the cup, Jesus Christ's righteousness has been imputed to you. You are qualified and fit and ship-shape and going to heaven. Colossians 2:10 says, "You are complete in Him." "Fit" is a nautical term that means "ship-shape, fully rigged and ready to sail." So all Christians equally stand righteous in Jesus Christ.

What has He qualified us for? Verse 12 says, "...to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light." That's just a fancy way of saying "heaven." You're ready to go to heaven.

Are you ready to go to heaven? I'm ready to go to heaven. This world is not my home. I'm ready to check out any moment and go to be with the Lord. What a blessing to know I'm fit for heaven!

Jesus said in John 14:27, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Then He said in John 14:1-3, "You believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house..." that's heaven "...are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. 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." This is Christ's cure for troubled hearts: we're going to heaven to the Father's house.

So keep your eyes on the prize. Keep the eternal perspective. Someone said, "When the outlook looks bad, try the up-look." We are going to heaven, because we've been forgiven of our sins. We are qualified.

The second blessing in this prayer that we should be thankful for is that the Father delivered and transferred us. "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love," verse 13. The verb Paul uses for "delivered" or transferred is only used of God in the Bible in the New Testament.

So only God can qualify you for heaven, and only God can transfer you from Satan's kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light and love of His dear, precious Son. We were helpless, and only God could deliver us.

Man's greatest problem is sin. Sin is the reason for all the problems in the world today. And Jesus came to save us from sin. It is a problem that no scientist, philosopher, psychiatrist, educator or politician can solve. I don't care how smart you are, how much money you have, how technically advanced you become—only God can deal with the sin problem. That's the problem of the heart of mankind. The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. So only God can deliver us. He delivers us from the power of darkness, verse 13. That is the jurisdiction or authority of the devil.

A lot of people don't like this, but it's Biblical: before you were saved, you were a child of the devil. That doesn't mean you went around with Satanic symbols on your body and went around doing rites and rituals to the devil. But Jesus said, "You are of your father, the devil" (John 8:44). Jesus was speaking to the religious leaders of His day.

So you are either a child of God or you're a child of the devil. Those are the only two categories for all of humanity. You're either forgiven and living in God's kingdom, or you're living in Satan's kingdom under bondage. You're either headed to heaven, or you're headed to hell. Those are the only two places available to mankind.

God comes through Christ and through the Cross. Thank God for the Cross of Jesus Christ! He's delivered us from "the power of darkness." The Father sent the Son. Jesus came to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He came to rescue us from sin's power and penalty.

Where it says "delivered," in verse 13, it literally means "to draw to oneself" or "to rescue." God, in His grace, rescued us by drawing us out of Satan's kingdom to Himself. I'm so thankful that

God, in His grace, mercy and love came to me, drew me to Himself, imputed Christ's righteousness to me and took me out of Satan's kingdom and transferred me into the kingdom of His own, dear Son. In the Greek, it is literally "the Son of His love." When Jesus was baptized, His Father spoke from heaven and said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Jesus is "the Son of His love." So we are transferred into the kingdom of love, into the kingdom of God.

It is not just a future kingdom—it will be that—but right now we live in the kingdom of God, because of the power of the Cross and what Jesus has done for us on the Cross. What a blessing that is!

And not only does God deliver us from Satan's kingdom and darkness, He transfers us into the kingdom of His dear Son. "Conveyed" us is also "transferred" or "translated" us. It is used of the deportation of a population from one country to another. We hear a lot about deportation in America right now. So we actually have been deported, spiritually; taken out of Satan's kingdom and placed in God's kingdom. We are citizens of heaven.

This is in the *eres tense* in the Greek. The verb "transferred" refers to a decisive transfer, which occurred at the moment of our past salvation and cannot be altered or changed. It is often said that if you're a Christian, you are taken out of Adam and put in Christ. God does that, and you can't change that. Why would you even want to?! God is the one who takes you out of "Adam the first," with its condemnation, sin and death, and places you in Christ, who is "the last Adam." And all of His righteousness is now in your account.

And once you are in Christ, you'll always be in Christ. What a blessing to know that once in Christ, there is "now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). So if you're a Christian, you're in Christ, and there is no condemnation, no separation (Romans 8:39) and no defeat, because we are in Christ, transferred into His marvelous kingdom. What a blessing that is!

The third blessing is in verse 14. It is that the Son has redeemed us. So the Father has qualified and delivered us, and through the Son, we have "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." What a blessing that God has transferred us, forgiven us through Jesus' blood.

So we were captives, and we were delivered, verse 13. We were slaves, and have been ransomed or set free, verse 14.

I want to give you five facts from verse 14 about our redemption. First, it is in Christ. One of the most important Biblical truths for you, as a Christian, to grasp is that you are in Christ. Ephesians 1:4 says, "He chose us in Him." We are forgiven in Christ (Ephesians 1:7). "You were sealed for the day of redemption" in Christ (Ephesians 4:30). So every Christian is in Christ, and in Christ, we are complete.

Second, our redemption is certain. Verse 14 says, "We have." Not "We might have," "We hope

to have” or “Hang onto your rabbit’s foot.” Some people think it’s the height of arrogance that you crazy Christians know you’re going to heaven. How do you know you’re going to heaven? Because of what Jesus did for us on the Cross. He died for me. He rose for me. He lives for me. He’s coming for me. I know I’m going to heaven. What a blessed assurance that is! So we are in Christ and certainly have eternal life.

Do you know you’re going to heaven?

John 3:16 is so simple but so profound: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” If you believe in Jesus Christ, you have “everlasting life.”

The third fact about redemption is its meaning. The word “redemption” means “to purchase and set free by the paying of a price.” Redemption implies our plight; that we were slaves, and we had to be bought and purchased. It involves the price, the blood of Jesus Christ. And the Person who redeemed us was God, Jesus Christ in human flesh. He is the perfect Son of God.

So it means we’ve been purchased and set free by paying a price. It conveys that we were all slaves to sin, slaves to Satan, slaves to the bondage of the law. By His death on the Cross, Jesus bought and paid for us and set us free.

Fourth, is the means. It was “through His blood,” verse 14. Wow! Praise God! Through the blood of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free. This is what communion is all about. We’re celebrating the Cross. We’re thanking God for the Cross of Jesus Christ.

When the Bible, especially the New Testament, speaks of the blood of Christ, it’s talking about His atoning, substitutionary sacrifice and death on the Cross. So everything the Bible teaches about the Cross is summarized and contained in the phrase “the blood of Jesus.”

People say, “You Christians talk about blood. ‘You’ve been washed in the blood!’” That freaks people out. It’s talking about the sacrificial, substitutionary death of Jesus on the Cross. That’s what brings our forgiveness and salvation; when we trust in Christ and in Christ alone.

1 Peter 1:18-19 says, “You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Colossians 1:20 says, “...having made peace through the blood of His cross.” Jesus is our Passover Lamb.

And fifth, look at the result, in verse 14. It brought about “the forgiveness of sins.” Redemption includes forgiveness. If you have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, you have been forgiven of all your sins. The word “forgiveness” means “to carry away, to take away, to send away.” In Psalm 103:12, David said it this way: “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” So it is the idea of taking them away, removing our transgressions.

We have what's called "the scapegoat" in the Old Testament. The goat's blood that was killed pictured the death of Christ. But then the priest would take a live goat, place his hands on the goat, which symbolically pronounced the sins of the people were transferred to the goat. Then they released the goat to run off into the hills. What a cool picture! "Praise God! My sins just got carried away!" (But what do you do if the goat shows up on your porch the next morning?!)

Aren't you glad that Jesus has carried your sins away for good?! He's dropped them in the sea of forgetfulness (Micah 7:19). And He put up a sign that said, "No fishing, Satan!" Satan tries to pull them back up. But our sins have been forgiven. So the first thing we experience as Christians is the joy of our sins being forgiven.

Never grow beyond the humble, grateful heart of thanksgiving by saying, "God, thank You for forgiving my sins."

"Thank You, Lord, for saving my soul.

Thank You, Lord, for making me whole.

Thank You, Lord, for giving to me

Thy great salvation so full and so free."

So we have been qualified and made fit for heaven. Thank Him. We have been delivered from Satan's kingdom of darkness and been transferred into the kingdom of His Son of love. Thank Him. We have been redeemed by the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross, and our sins have been forgiven. Tell the Lord, "Thank You."