

Lesson 2

Rescue, Redemption, and Forgiveness

Colossians 1:12-14

¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light.

¹³He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

¹⁴In Him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Introduction

Paul's letter to the Colossians is saturated with gratitude and thankfulness, reflecting the depth of his appreciation for God's work in the lives of believers. In 1:3-8, Paul begins by expressing his thankfulness for the Colossians' initial reception of the gospel and the evident fruit of their faith. This theme of thankfulness continues as Paul prays for their spiritual growth and strength in 1:9-11. Finally, in 1:12, Paul circles back to thankfulness, underscoring its importance in recognizing and celebrating God's ongoing work in ensuring their salvation.

Christian thankfulness is not merely a response to favorable circumstances but a fundamental aspect of our spiritual existence. It acknowledges that our salvation and spiritual growth are gifts from God, not something we have earned. This is especially significant in the context of Colossians, where false teachings threatened to undermine the sufficiency of the gospel by suggesting that salvation required additional elements beyond Christ.

In verse 12, Paul emphasizes that God has qualified believers, making them worthy of sharing in the saints' inheritance. This divine qualification is the basis for three significant aspects of our spiritual life: deliverance from the domain of darkness, redemption through Jesus' sacrifice, and the forgiveness of sins. Each of these elements underscores the power of God's work in our lives, moving us from darkness to light and ensuring our place in His eternal kingdom.

Through this lesson, we are reminded to continually express our gratitude for God's unparalleled gifts and recognize His work's sufficiency in our salvation. As we delve deeper into the passage, we will explore how these themes of deliverance, redemption, and forgiveness shape our understanding of our identity in Christ and our response to His grace.

1:12 – Covered in Thankfulness

This brings us back to the thanks Paul gave in verse three. In 1:3-8, Paul expresses his thankfulness for what God did for the Colossians at the beginning of their salvation. In 1:9-11, Paul speaks of God's strengthening power for those who saturate their hearts with the knowledge of Him. Now, in verse 12, he thanks God for what he has done and continues working to ensure their salvation.

The giving of thanks is a central theme in Colossians.⁸ In many ways, thankfulness summarizes the reality of our spiritual existence. When we give thanks, we acknowledge the receipt of a gift, not something we

have earned. May we always remember we are saved by faith and stand in grace, Romans 5:1-2. This theme is significant when considering the overall context of Colossians, where false teachers were beginning to assert that a person's salvation depended on something else (Judaism/Greek philosophy) + Jesus. As you consider verses 1-12 as a whole, see the all-sufficiency of the gospel to save, and the work of God required to make it all possible.

God Has Qualified You

The foundation for our spiritual existence rests with the Father, who has graciously provided what every sinner needs to be considered worthy to be a part of His people. God has *qualified* you. The word means “to make sufficient; to be empowered, to be made complete.” The person who falls back on the feeling *I'm not worthy* needs to embrace the teaching here: **God has made you worthy by His power, not your own.** Because of His work, you get to *share in the saints' inheritance in light*. Like the Israelites of old, we each get a share in the eternal and heavenly *promised land*.

1:13-14 - Three Reasons for Thanksgiving

The Father's act of *qualification* has resulted in three things that serve as ongoing realities in our spiritual life:

1:13 - *We are delivered from the domain of darkness*

MacArthur¹⁰ refers to this as “spiritual liberation.” We have been rescued from Satan's kingdom and brought unto Jesus himself. Douglass Moo¹¹ refers to this as “rescue by transference.” We can jointly participate with the King under His reign and bring His lordship to bear in the world.

Our transference happened upon our baptism, Romans 6:2-7, 11. Spiritually, you no longer live where Satan dwells. You are a new creature, 2 Corinthians 5:17. Paul refers to this as being *transferred*. Think total removal. A change in geography, i.e., from the realm of Satanic darkness to the indescribable light of God's kingdom.

Some have linked this passage to the writing in Exodus 6:6-8 concerning God's rescue of the Hebrews from Egypt:

Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will **deliver** you from slavery to them, and I will **redeem** you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. **I will take you** to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. **I will bring you** into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.’”

Exodus 6:6-8

Note the bolded words: God “delivers,” God “redeems,” and finally, God “brings” His people into a place of inheritance. The Colossians account brings all of these concepts into the spiritual realm of application.

1.14 - *We have redemption*

Jesus purchased your redemption at the cross, Romans 3:24-26; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19. Jesus repurchased sinners from Satan by offering His own life as a ransom.¹²

1:14b - We are forgiven

Transference into the kingdom brings pardon. We are no longer under condemnation, Romans 8:1. God has sent your sins away, *as far as the east is from the west*, Psalm 103:12. Your sins *have been cast into the depths of the sea*, Micah 7:19. The forgiveness granted at the cross is sufficient to cover our past, present, and future sins. While we still sin as we await our departure to heaven, as long as our hearts remain faithful to Him, we can rest knowing that Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us, Hebrews 7:25. Our salvation is never precarious. It rests on the continuous work of deity who are more than committed to see their work completed in us.

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Conclusion

Reflecting on Colossians 1:12-14, we see a powerful testament to the centrality of thankfulness in the Christian faith. Paul's emphasis on gratitude highlights the importance of recognizing God's continuous work in our lives—from the initiation of our salvation to the ongoing process of spiritual growth and transformation. Paul reminds us of the profound and multifaceted nature of God's grace by thanking God for qualifying us, delivering us from the domain of darkness, redeeming us through Christ's sacrifice, and forgiving our sins.

Thankfulness reminds us of the unearned nature of our blessings and the sufficiency of the gospel. In a context where false teachings threatened to add human efforts to the equation of salvation, Paul firmly reestablishes that God alone qualifies us. This divine qualification empowers us to share in the saints' inheritance, moving us from spiritual bondage into the glorious light of His kingdom.

As we embrace these truths, our lives should reflect an attitude of continuous gratitude, recognizing that every spiritual blessing and every step of our journey results from God's grace. This thankfulness is not only a response to what God has done but also a foundation for how we live out our faith, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God.

Ultimately, this passage calls us to a deeper appreciation of our spiritual inheritance and a more profound commitment to living in a manner worthy of the Lord. By continually giving thanks and acknowledging God's transformative power in our lives, we can walk confidently in the light, fully pleasing to Him and bearing the fruit of a life redeemed and sustained by His grace.

For Discussion

1. How does Paul's emphasis on thankfulness in Colossians 1:12-14 deepen our understanding of its importance in the Christian life? What practical ways can we cultivate a spirit of gratitude in our daily routines?

2. What does it mean that God has "qualified" us to share in the inheritance of the saints? How does this qualification affect our identity and self-worth as believers?
3. How do you understand the concept of being delivered from the domain of darkness? Can you share a personal experience where you felt God's deliverance in your life?
4. What does it mean that Jesus purchased our redemption at the cross? How does this understanding influence your daily walk with God?
5. How does recognizing the completeness of God's forgiveness (past, present, and future) impact how you live and interact with others? How can we better embrace this forgiveness in our spiritual lives?
6. Considering the context of Colossians, where false teachers suggested that salvation required more than Jesus, how can we guard against similar false teachings today? What are some modern examples of such teachings?
7. How can we live a life that is worthy of the Lord and fully pleasing to Him? What practical steps can we take to align our daily conduct with this calling?
8. How does a thankful heart contribute to our spiritual growth and maturity? Can you identify moments where gratitude led to significant spiritual breakthroughs?
9. What does sharing in the inheritance of the saints mean to you personally? How does this promise of an eternal and heavenly inheritance shape your perspective on earthly challenges and successes?
10. How can we incorporate giving thanks into our spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, worship, and Bible study? What are some creative ways to make gratitude a regular part of our church community and personal devotions?

⁸ See 1:3, 12; 2:6-7; 3:15,17; and 4:2.

⁹ Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick McKenzie. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 825. Subsequent citations will be identified as LSJ.

¹⁰ MacArthur, John F., Jr. *Colossians*, p. 40.

¹¹ Moo, Douglas J. *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008, p. 102.

¹² See Mark 10:45.