

AM Psalm 105:1-11 & Colossians 1:3-15

Remembering Christ and One Another

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[0 : 00] We have two readings this morning. The first one is from Psalm 105. It takes up again that theme of being thankful for God's blessings.

Psalm 105, the first 11 verses. Psalm 10, the first 11 verses.

Seek the Lord, rejoice. Seek the Lord and his strength. Seek his presence continually. Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles and the judgments he uttered.

O offspring of Abraham his servant, children of Jacob his chosen ones. He is the Lord our God. His judgments are in all the earth.

He remembers his covenant forever. The word that he commanded for a thousand generations.

The covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying to you, I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance.

[1 : 50] Now we turn over to Paul's letter to Colossians. Verses chapter 1, verses 3 to 14.

This will be the passage that we'll be looking at a little later. Colossians 1, verse 3. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

Of this you have heard before. In the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing, as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.

Just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

[3 : 12] And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son. In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Let me ask you to turn now to Colossians chapter 1. When I last preached here back in January, I began a series of studies on the book of Colossians.

And we looked then at just the opening greetings in verses 1 and 2, where Paul calls them saints and faithful brothers.

[4 : 52] Today, we're going to look at Paul's prayer for the Colossians.

But with today being communion, I want to approach it just slightly differently. Instead of one long sermon, I'm going to divide it into two shorter sermons.

One now, and the other at the table. And since the great theme of communion is remembrance, I'm going to take that theme of remembrance in both of these sermons.

remembering one another in prayer, in verses 3 to 11, and remembering Christ in praise, in verses 12 to 14.

Theologians sometimes speak of the horizontal and vertical dimensions of communion. The horizontal dimension is our communion, our fellowship with our fellow believers.

[6 : 20] The vertical is our communion with the Lord. Indeed, the whole Christian life can be seen in those two dimensions.

Our relationship with God and our relationship with one another. Both are seen here. Paul shows here his love for his fellow Christians.

That's the horizontal dimension. But he shows it in prayer. And that involves the vertical dimension. And that prayer then turns into praise, which is entirely the vertical dimension. But in this first sermon, let's focus just on prayer.

Let me remind you of the background. The date is about AD 62. Paul is under house arrest in Rome.

[7 : 29] And Epaphras probably the minister at Colossae has travelled over a thousand miles to come and see him and tell him about the church.

Colossae was a small town in the Roman province of Asia, about a hundred miles east of Ephesus in modern day Turkey. The church was probably founded during Paul's first visit to Ephesus, but probably not by Paul himself, because he says in chapter 2 that he had not seen them face to face. Even so, he has them in his heart and he's praying for them. Indeed, it would seem that he was praying for them often.

We always thank God for you, he says, when we pray. Always implies not just once or twice, but frequently.

You'll find similar statements in pretty much all of Paul's letters. He was praying for the Romans, for the Corinthians, for the Ephesians, and everyone else.

[8 : 50] The churches and Christians everywhere. You wonder, how did he find time to do anything else? But he was praying for them because he loved them.

Just like his master. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. Paul loved the church and prayed for it.

Now, here, straight away, is a challenge for us. how faithful are you in praying for your fellow Christians?

Paul doesn't actually say here that he's giving us an example. He just wants to tell them he's praying. But he does tell us elsewhere that we should be praying for one another as well.

Ephesians 5, for example, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication for all the saints.

[9 : 58] Paul was doing that. Are you? I'm speaking now, of course, to Christians. If you're not a Christian, then, of course, you can't pray for your fellow Christians because you're not one yourself.

indeed, if you're not a Christian, you probably don't pray at all, or not very much. It's Christ who opens up the world of prayer to us.

It's through Christ that we come to God in prayer. Without Christ, prayer is just calling out in the dark. And it's Christ who puts our fellow Christians in our hearts to pray for them.

But if you are a Christian, prayer should be a regular part of your life, and praying for one another an important part of that. The greatest Christians have all been men and women of prayer.

Think of Luther, for example, who said that he was so busy that he couldn't afford to spend less than three hours a day in prayer. There was so much to pray about.

[11 : 19] Or George Miller praying daily for his orphans for food to be provided. But also I've certainly known many ordinary Christians who have been faithful in prayer.

And I'm sure you have too. There was one dear old fisherman who I knew down in Cornwall, Edward Downing. He'd seen revival back in the 1920s and he was a man of prayer.

Every morning he used to go down to the harbour at Mousel and he used to find a quiet place among the rocks where he could pray for every minister that he knew.

And that included me. was always a great comfort to me to think that hundreds of miles away there was a man who I knew was praying for me.

There was another lady we knew at Lincoln called Joan. She'd been a missionary in the Lebanon and she still had the missionary spirit into her old age.

[12 : 38] She used to invite her neighbours into her house for Bible studies and she used to hold a missionary prayer meeting in her house and she used to get to every prayer meeting she possibly could not just the church prayer meetings but special prayer meetings for the persecuted church and she used to encourage others to go to those meetings as well.

Now I know some Christians perhaps have a special ministry in prayer but all of us should pray and we should spread our net wide in prayer praying not just for ourselves not just for our family not even just for our own church those around you at communion today but wider than that for the church of God throughout the world like Paul so what did he pray well we can divide it into two parts Paul's thanksgiving and Paul's request first Paul's thanksgiving we always thank God the father of our Lord Jesus Christ when we pray for you thanksgiving is one of the marks of a Christian worldly people spend their lives complaining complaining about their health complaining about their work complaining about the church

Christians give thanks we read in Psalm 105 oh give thanks to the Lord well Paul gives thanks here for these Colossians he thanks the father notice as the source of all blessing and when we pray we pray to the father through the son by the spirit that is the proper order of the trinity and there is a trinity of spiritual qualities in them that he gives thanks for faith love and hope now where have you heard that threesome before 1 Corinthians 13 of course so now faith hope and love abide these three you also find it in 1

Thessalonians 1 and verse 3 where Paul gives thanks for their work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope they're sometimes called the three graces the Greeks had three goddesses called the three graces there are many paintings and statues of them well here is something infinitely better those Greek goddesses didn't exist these three graces certainly do in every true Christian and it's right to thank God for them because they're the gift of God faith in Christ was obviously their trust in Christ as their Lord and Saviour love for the saints was their love for their fellow Christians saints as we saw last time simply means holy ones and all

Christians are called saints in the New Testament and the hope laid up for them in heaven is eternal life in Christ it's all about Christ notice faith in Christ love for Christ's people being with Christ Christ all of this he says they had learned in the word of truth the gospel which he says is bearing fruit and increasing throughout the world as it is among you that was true then it's true even more so now where the gospel has spread to lands that Paul hadn't even heard of and millions believe sometimes we get a little downhearted because we see how few there are in our own church or in our own country but there are multitudes throughout the world who are coming to

[17:29] Christ and that is another cause of thanksgiving and they'd heard it he says from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant a faithful minister who had also told Paul about them praise God for ministers like Epaphras today and pray that he'll raise up more men like this perhaps even that God would send an Epaphras to us now we need to pause at this point and ask could Paul give thanks for us there's another challenge for us isn't it our faith love and hope in evidence amongst us we need to ask that individually and as a church are you personally trusting in the Lord are you personally full of love for the people of

Christ are you personally looking forward to being with Christ in heaven and is this a church where faith and love and hope are found in abundance may the Lord grant it to be so but now we come finally in this first sermon to Paul's requests in verses 9 to 11 and here's a third challenge for us how do you pray for your fellow Christians probably you pray for them when they're unwell or they're going through some kind of trouble and that's right and good but Paul prays here on an altogether higher level he prays for their spiritual needs five needs in particular first wisdom in verse 9 that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding second holiness in verse 10 that knowing his will you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord fully pleasing to him third fruitfulness end of verse 10 bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God fourth strength verse 11 may you be strengthened with all power according to all endurance and patience with joy and fifth on in verse 12 thankfulness giving thanks to the father for all that he had done for them in Christ wisdom holiness fruitfulness strength thankfulness isn't that what Christians still need today how many Christians lack wisdom and do foolish things Solomon prayed for wisdom didn't he given that open invitation ask for anything you wish he prayed not for long life or the life of his enemies he prayed for wisdom and God gave it to him James tell us if anyone lacks wisdom let him ask of God who gives to all men freely where does that wisdom come from well it comes from the word of God effectively Paul is praying here that they might know the word of God pray that for yourselves and for others again how many Christians lack holiness living worldly lives that dishonor Christ but Shane prayed make me as holy as a mortal man can be may that be our prayer and how many are unfruitful God looks for the fruit of the spirit in us love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness

self control and he looks for fruit from our ministry are we unfruitful are the churches of Christ in Scotland unfruitful then pray for fruitfulness and how many Christians lack spiritual strength you know we sometimes speak perhaps unfairly about the younger generation as being snowflakes melting away every time there's a little bit of heat on them but I think a lot of Christians young and old are snowflakes they collapse under the slightest pressure the Christian life is a marathon and we need strength to run the race to the end it's a battlefield we need strength to endure temptation trouble hardship persecution pray for strength for yourself and for others and how many Christians are unthankful focusing on their troubles they forget what God has done for them but I'll come to that in the second sermon what we have here is a recipe for the perfect church these

[23 : 21] Colossians already had faith love and hope add to that wisdom holiness fruitfulness strength thankfulness stir wealth and what do you have a perfect church we fall far short of that but may that be our aim and our prayer we're going to pause now and we're going to sing again and then we'll look go As we approach the Lord's table, let me read again those final verses from Colossians that we read before.

Verses 12 to 14. Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Paul's prayer for the Colossians here takes wings and flies up to heaven.

He has just prayed that the church might be thankful. And that sets him thinking of all that they have to be thankful for.

[25 : 24] All that God has done for us in Christ. And that of course is the theme of communion. Remembering Christ in praise.

Giving thanks for all that he has done for us. In some churches the communion is called the Eucharist.

Which means the thanksgiving. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, the psalmist says.

Well Paul invites us here to remember three great benefits that we have in Christ. Qualification, deliverance, and redemption.

First qualification in verse 12. Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

[26 : 34] That's a very striking phrase. He has qualified us. We normally think of qualification as something that we achieve.

Years ago when I worked in the bank I spent several years studying for my Institute of Bankers exams. Which was the professional qualification in banking.

Doctors study even longer. Five, six, seven years to qualify as a doctor. It's hard work. No one just gives it to you.

You have to achieve it yourself. But here is something completely different. We do not qualify for heaven.

God qualifies us. Qualify has turned into a transitive verb. Something God does for us, not something we do or deserve.

[27 : 47] And what is it that he qualifies us for? To share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Inheritance is an important theme in the Bible.

You may have noticed it at the end of that reading in Psalm 105. Israel was given the land of Canaan for an inheritance. Well in the New Testament we have a greater inheritance.

Heaven itself. Notice it's not your inheritance personally and alone. It's an inheritance that you share with the saints in light.

There are going to be millions of others in heaven with you. But how can we enter into that inheritance? If we had to qualify for ourselves, then it would simply be impossible.

Heaven is the dwelling place of God. To dwell with God. To dwell with God we would have to be absolutely perfect. It would be like setting the pass mark in my Institute of Bankers exams at 100%.

[29 : 01] There would be no bankers today. But God has provided a way through Christ. He sent his son, his beloved son.

To live a perfect life. To die for our sins. And to rise again. Now all who trust in him are qualified for heaven.

Cleansed from our sins. Clothed in his righteousness. That's what communion is all about. But then secondly also deliverance.

In verse 13. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness. And transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son. Once again deliverance is an important theme in the Old Testament.

The Israelites were delivered out of slavery in Egypt. By the mighty hand of God. In order to bring them to the promised land. That's the theme of the Passover meal.

[30 : 11] Which lies behind communion. God has delivered us with a far greater deliverance. Setting us free from Satan.

In order to bring us into the kingdom of God. Before we were saved we were not merely unqualified for heaven. It was worse than that.

We were captives of the devil. The prince of darkness. We were slaves to our sins. We were heading for hell. But God has rescued us.

And set us free. Lifting us from one kingdom into the other. Now that was no simple matter.

We've seen in the news recently. How hard it has been for Israel to rescue the captives in Gaza.

Hidden away there they think in underground tunnels.

[31 : 12] The whole Israeli army hasn't been able to deliver them. How much harder is it to deliver souls from the power of the devil.

And yet God has done precisely that. And how? Once again through Christ. Once again through the cross. By his death and resurrection.

He has led us like Moses. Out into freedom. Jesus himself said in the synagogue at Nazareth.

Quoting Isaiah. He has sent me to proclaim liberty.

To the captives. And he has been true to his word. We have left the kingdom of darkness. And entered the kingdom of light.

We've left the kingdom of Satan. And entered the kingdom of God. And it is God who has done this. Through Christ.

[32 : 13] We couldn't deliver ourselves. But he has delivered us. And that too we remember at communion. Finally redemption.

In verse 14. In whom we have redemption. The forgiveness of sins. Once again redemption is an important theme in the Old Testament. To redeem is to buy back that which was lost.

And there were laws in the Old Testament. For redeeming property or slaves. A price was paid. And the property was returned.

And all the slaves set free. Israel was redeemed. Out of Egypt.

Well here is a greater redemption. Redemption from sin. We were lost. But Christ has paid the price.

[33 : 15] On the cross. So that our sins. All of them. Might be forgiven. So that our lost souls. Might be reclaimed. For the kingdom of God.

In the book of Revelation. The saints. Are seen. Praising God. Because he has. Redeemed them. Unto God.

Out of every nation. And kingdom. And tribe. And people. For the kingdom. Once again. This was central. To the Passover.

And it is central. To communion. The price of. Israel's. Redemption. From Egypt. Was the blood. Of the Passover lamb. The price of our redemption. From sin. Is the blood of Christ. The lamb of God.

[34 : 14] One of the cups. That was drunk. At the Passover. Was actually called. The cup of. Redemption. And it is. Thought. That it's at that point.

That Jesus said. This. Is my blood. Of the new covenant. There is a. Flow of thought. Here notice. He has qualified us. For the inheritance. Of the saints. In light. He has delivered us. Out of.

Darkness. And he has delivered us.

By redeeming us. Put those three together. And you have. A perfect. And a complete. Salvation. We are qualified.

For heaven. We are delivered. From hell. And we are redeemed. For God. What more could we wish.

[35 : 14] Let's now. Share. In the. Bread. And the wine. Let me. Read. The familiar. Passage. In 1 Corinthians 11. Where. Paul.

Recalls. The institution. Of the. Lord's Supper. For I received. From the Lord.

What I also delivered. To you. That the Lord Jesus. On the night. When he was betrayed. Took bread. And when he had given thanks.

He broke it. And said. This is my body. Which is for you. Do this. In remembrance of me. In the same way.

Also. He took the cup. After supper. Saying. This cup. Is the new covenant. In my blood. Do this. As often. As you drink it.

[36 : 08] In remembrance. Of me. For as often. As you eat. This bread. And drink. This cup. You proclaim. The Lord's. Death. Until he comes. Let's give thanks.

Now. For the bread. And the wine. Our gracious. God. And father. We have so much. To give you. Thanks for.

We thank you. For our salvation. Through. The death. And resurrection. Of the Lord. Jesus Christ. Thank you.

That you have. Qualified us. For heaven. Thank you. That you have. Delivered us. From the power. Of darkness. Thank you. That you have.

Redeemed us. From our sins. And redeemed us. For yourself. It is. Our great desire. Lord. Always to serve you.

[37 : 05] We give you. Thanks now. For this. Simple way. In which we are. Commanded. To remember. These things. We give you.

Thanks. For the bread. Simple food. And yet. Representative. To us. Of the bread. Of God.

That has come down. From heaven. Grant. Grant. Grant. That as we. Eat of it. Shortly. That we may. Be renewed. In spirit. Grant.

That we may. Indeed. Feed upon Christ. Every day. Of our lives. We thank you. Too. For the wine. The fruit.

Of the vine. Again. Again. A very. Common. And ordinary. Drink. And yet. Speaks to us.

[38 : 00] Of something. Very uncommon. And very special. Speaks to us. Of the precious blood. Of Christ. As of a lamb.

Without spot. Or blemish. Shed. For us. Grant. That as we. Shortly. Drink. Of the cup. That we might. Think upon him.

Who died. For us. And that we may. Be inwardly. Renewed. So Lord. Grant. That your spirit.

Would be present. With us. Help us. To be mindful. Of one another. Also. As well as of yourself.

That as we. Share in this. Bread and wine. It may not.

Just be a personal. Act. But one that we're. Doing together. Because we. Are. Destined. Together. To share.

[38 : 54] In the. Inheritance. Of the saints. In light. Hear us. In these prayers. For we ask. In Jesus Christ's. Name. Amen.

Amen. Jesus took bread. And broke it. And said. This is. My body.

Which is. For you. Let's. Eat. Of the bread. Together. In remembrance. Of him. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Jesus took of the cup and said drink all from it this is my blood of the new covenant shed for many for the remission of sin let us drink of the cup together let us conclude by singing from psalm 118 on page you