

What More Could We Ask For?

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[0 : 00] For a short time to a reading in Colossians chapter 1. We're going to look at the end of the section that we read. The reading from verse 11. 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.

As you go through this letter that Paul wrote to the church at Colossae, and indeed as you go through many of Paul's writings, and as you go through the scriptures in general, you find that the writers, inspired by God, they are able to put into words, just in so few words, such a clear teaching. It's a gift I sometimes envy in people, being able to put into a few words, something that you would struggle, even in a few sentences or paragraphs, to put across.

When I first went to study in Edinburgh, one of the first essays I handed in came back, marked, and I'd passed, and I was delighted, but there's a little bit of feedback on the essay, and the professor had said where I'd been writing strongly, or where I could improve, but one of the comments that really stood out for me was, a bit wordy.

[1 : 39] And you think to yourself, it's fine for a professor, he's able to put things across so clearly, but I was obviously struggling just to find words, and when you've got a word count to reach, you maybe just fill it in with a few extra words here and there.

But I'm sure you all know people, and you're trying to get something across in words, and then someone just comes in, and in one sentence they're able to sum up things so beautifully, and just in a way that is so clear, and makes so much sense.

It is a gift to be able to do it. And it is a gift that we have from God, that we have his word in such a way to us, and that his word comes across to us with so much clarity.

Even when there's times when you're reading through something, and you've got questions about what you're reading, and you're wondering, where's this going, and how can we go forward with this?

And yet it's followed so often by a qualifier that just sums up things so beautifully, and puts everything into perspective. And here as Paul is writing to the Colossians, he does this for us.

[2 : 50] He's talking here about living a life pleasing to God, which really begins there in verse 10, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened in power according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father.

So there's so much there for us about the wonder of all that God has done for us, joyfully giving thanks to God. But there are people who are enduring things, who are suffering things, and so just to leave it there would make you leave you wondering, how can this be so?

How can we go on in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, bearing fruit, being strengthened, enduring with patience, with joy, and giving thanks?

How can you go on in this? Well, he goes on to give a reason why. In just a few words, he sums up for us a reason why they and we can go forward like that, looking to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him.

And how is it? Well, he gives us great reason for thanksgiving and seeing the bigger picture and reminds them here of the love of God towards them, the love of God that will never leave them in the midst of all that they are seeking to do for him.

[4 : 26] And there are three reasons why they can focus here that we want to think about this evening. Three things that they have and we have through faith.

You will have heard or seen the idea of a genie in the bottle. Maybe it's in a cartoon or something like that where someone finds a bottle and rubs the bottle and the genie pops out and you've got

three wishes.

It's make-believe, of course, but sometimes when you see this, it makes you think, what would I ask for? If I had such an opportunity, what would I ask for?

But what if God was asking you? What do you want of me? So when I think of that question, I come back to Bartimaeus. Blind Bartimaeus who met with Jesus and Jesus asked him that very question. What do you want me to do for you? And what was Bartimaeus' response? Lord, that I may see. All the things that he could have asked for, it was that he could see.

[5 : 36] And that is what Jesus gave to him. Well, here we see three things that are ours through Christ. And they're not wishful thinking.

They're not make-believe. They are ours through faith in Christ. And that's what Paul is reminding the Colossians here of. That in their going forward, in their living a life pleasing to God, bearing fruit, and all of these things, with patience and joy and giving thanks, he gives them three things that they can hold on to.

And that's what we have in the middle of verse 12 down to verse 14. And the three things that are highlighted for us are there is a share in the inheritance of the saints.

That there is a deliverance, as it speaks of in verse 13, delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son.

And then the final one we see there in verse 14, that is redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Three things that could seem almost like wishful thinking for us.

[6 : 50] And yet it is what we have in Christ. I just want us to focus on these three things together just for a short time. And we begin with that, share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Everything that we have here, as Paul is writing, is the foundation is God. And what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who lives.

That is the foundation of all of his writings. It's the foundation of scriptures, as we have it. It's the foundation of all that we see in the Old, right through to the New Testament.

And language that Paul uses here has so much of it reflecting the Old Testament as well. In summing up in a few words, there's a depth of teaching here and a breadth of teaching that covers all kinds of situations down through the generations of God's people.

And here as he speaks of a share in the inheritance of the saints in light, it takes us right back to the Old Testament and to the promises of God, to his covenant promises that he gave through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that they would have an inheritance, that God's people would have an inheritance.

[8 : 17] And when you go back to the Old Testament, so much of it was to do with land and the promise of a land for God's people.

And it's the promises that you see fulfilled during the Old Testament days with the Exodus, as God led the children of Israel out, he was leading them to the promised land, taking them out of slavery in Egypt to the promised land.

And so there was a kind of exclusive side to that inheritance, that it was for God's chosen people in the Old Testament, God's chosen race.

But yet there is a change for us here now in the New Testament. Still the same kind of language, this inheritance and a share in the inheritance, but there's a change.

And that change is because of Christ's coming and of what he has done for his people. You see, the inheritance is broadened out.

[9 : 25] It's for all of the saints in light. And you think of this in light of how the Old Testament, we're looking at God's chosen people, but the New Testament speaks about Jew and Gentile.

It speaks about all of God's people in a broader sense. And it's not just speaking about a land, it's more than that.

We have an inheritance, a share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Of what? Of God's chosen place for his people.

Not just a land in an earthly sense, but in a heavenly sense. Of what we have through Christ as our Lord. And when you think of inheritance, it's something that so often causes difficulties in this world. Especially when there's a lot to be gained from an inheritance. How many people and families have fallen out over an inheritance?

[10 : 35] Something that has been left by someone for somebody else. And maybe somebody's been left out. Feeling that they were due something. And they get nothing. And if you look at it so

much in the world of the rich people who have passed away, how often you see it's caused so many problems.

Famous people, you could almost list them off. People who have passed away. Michael Jackson, Bob Marley, John Lennon, Nelson Mandela, Robin Williams.

There's been a whole host of famous people who have passed away. And if you look it up, what you find is what they've left behind has just caused so much tension.

Fallouts. People claiming what they feel is rightfully theirs and somebody else has got it. even in some cases has been left to an animal or to a charity and they feel so hard done by.

And it causes so many problems. But yet here we have a wonderful inheritance that is for all and for any who will put their trust in the Lord Jesus.

[11:46] It's for the saints, the holy ones, for Jew and Gentile, for young and old, for rich and poor. No matter what, it covers all.

By faith in Christ, he has qualified you to share the inheritance of the saints in light. It is a wonderful promise.

And Paul puts it to the Ephesians as well, where he speaks there in chapter 3, in verse 6, he says, this mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Again, just a few words that sum it up for us. The mystery that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

So there's no debate, there's no dispute. It's what is ours through the gospel, through faith in Jesus Christ.

[12:55] And when you think of the famous people and the disputes over their inheritance, just looking at it for money, and yet the gospel has so much to offer on people who should away, they don't want it.

And this is what is ours through Christ, an inheritance with the saints, something that can be never taken from us, that is ours through Christ.

What a wonderful blessing that is. So then, in light of what he has spoken about before, of fully pleasing, bearing fruit, increasing in knowledge, having patience, with all joy, giving thanks, here is one reason why, the inheritance that is ours.

The second thing we see here is a rescue from darkness. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son.

So as well as having something that we really had no right to, this inheritance, ours through the mercy of God, verse 3 leads on from there then.

[14:09] And it's telling us that there are two kingdoms that we have around us. That there is the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, the kingdom of God.

And we can only be in one or the other. And the one that should cause us fear is the kingdom of darkness. darkness. And yet, when you read in other places like in John's gospel, you read there that the people loved darkness.

They loved that aspect of life where they felt hidden from God. And yet, there is that assurance that God will bring all into the light.

But in what way? Well, here we are given assurance that when we put our trust in the Lord, he has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us.

So he's taken us from one and put us into the other. And we are put into the kingdom of his beloved son. Again, when you think of Bartimaeus, blind Bartimaeus, how he was brought from darkness to light.

[15:19] He was blind and could not see and yet, by the mercy of God, he was brought to see Jesus and follow him on the way. And that is, again, the Christian hope that we have here.

The reasons that we have to be full of joy and patience and all of these things is that we've been brought from one place to another. John Newton was another one who saw that change and transformation himself.

How he knew the grace of God and he put it so well when he said, it's almost like the darkness still has a little hold in some ways and yet he knows he's in the kingdom of light but he knows he's still a work in progress but he knows he's in the kingdom of the beloved son but he says, I am not what I ought to be.

I am not what I want to be and I am not what I hope to be in another world but still, I am not what I once used to be and by the grace of God, I am what I am.

The grace of God which enables us to see where we've been taken from and taken to. And again, this is Old Testament language for us as well when you look at the experience of God's people in the Old Testament of one kingdom and another waging war against them.

[16:43] You think of the children of Israel again and the Exodus and how it speaks of it in this way in Exodus 6 verse 6 it says, Therefore, say to the Israelites, I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

I will free you from being slaves to them and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. There is the Lord working in their midst.

He is the one who brings them out of the yoke of the Egyptians and who brings them into another kingdom, another place. They were physically delivered from one to another but now the emphasis is on a kingdom of darkness, the works of evil of this world, to the kingdom of the beloved son and the redemption and the redemption that we have in Christ.

And the trouble that the Colossians and so many other churches in Paul's day faced up to was the false teachers coming in and saying, you need to do you need to do you need to do you need to do X, Y and Z before you can be qualified for the kingdom of God.

But no, he delivers from the domain of darkness. He brings us out and puts us in. Jesus does not just bring us out of darkness but he brings us into his own kingdom.

[18:21] Jesus saves us and he speaks here of that darkness and light and we speak of darkness around us especially in the winter months and we talk about maybe our eyes becoming accustomed to the dark so that you're able to see a little at least in the darkness when your eyes readjust but would you choose to live in darkness?

Would you choose to go out on a dark night and say it's a full moon so I'll think I'll switch my car headlights off and just go by that little light I have from the moon? You wouldn't.

You would still keep your lights on. You wouldn't go out to the shed and not switch on the light when it's dark to start looking around for something. You would put the lights on.

and so as God speaks to us here about the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of his beloved son which one would you want?

Which one would you choose to be in? Why would be happy walking in darkness when there is the kingdom of his beloved son the kingdom of light to be part of?

[19:40] God is able to save and that's the wonder of it and he saves sinners transfers him from one kingdom to another and Jesus warned of this he warned in the gospel of John so often about the need to be in the light that he is the light of the world and in chapter 12 he said to the people there Jesus said to them the light is among you for a little while longer walk while you have the light lest darkness overtake you the one who walks in darkness does not know where he is going while you have the light believe in the light that you may become sons of the light and here we have the kingdom of his beloved son that we would be his sons of light so God has qualified you for an inheritance he has transferred you from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of his beloved son there are two reasons to go on and joy and thanksgiving and you have the third and final one here as well in verse 14 the kingdom of the beloved son and it's in the son in whom we have redemption the forgiveness of sins so we are brought into view of the cross now of all that has been done for us on the cross of Christ the redemption the forgiveness of sin that is ours through Christ so we have an inheritance we have a rescue but perhaps even more importantly we have the forgiveness of sins we couldn't do any of these things we couldn't give ourselves the inheritance we couldn't transfer ourselves from the kingdom of darkness to light and we certainly could never redeem ourselves because as the psalmist says to redeem my life is costly none sufficient price can pay but the

Lord Jesus has paid it for us we have redemption we have redeemed a price has been paid and again that word has reference to the Old Testament redemption is so much related to slavery and to being in bondage and to be redeemed was to be set free and that's certainly what the people would have had in their mind here even looking back to the exodus and being slaves in Egypt to be redeemed was to be set free from that slavery so now we are looking at it in another way a redemption the forgiveness of sin the Bible the New Testament speaks about being in bondage to sin being slaves to sin and the only way to be freed is through the price being paid for us and Christ came to redeem sinners to save sinners from their sin so that no longer we will be slaves to sin but

we will be free in him and the image here you think of being set free from prison there's almost two ways it can happen there was a series called prison break where two brothers escaped from prison but all the time that they had escaped they were always looking behind them and wondering would they be caught would they be found out would they be put back in and that's one way you could look at this a freedom a forgiveness of sins but we're always looking behind our back just like being on run on the run from prison and you can't live your life because you're always in fear you're always wondering what's ahead but the image here is not that it's much more powerful the image is of a rescue of being freed of being found guilty and put in prison but someone else has come someone else has confessed someone else has taken the guilt that you had and taken it on themselves so you are set free because they have taken the price and that is what we have here we have redemption the forgiveness of sin because as Mark puts it in his gospel as it says in his gospel for even the son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many he has redeemed his people so we have these three things three things that for some it can seem just like wishful thinking that we would ever have such a blessing of God in Christ but here we are told what is ours through faith in Christ and why we can go on strengthened with endurance with patience with joy giving thanks because we have a share in the inheritance of the saints we have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of his beloved son and we have redemption we have freedom we have the forgiveness of sin isn't it a wonderful reason to give thanks to God for what we have through Christ and why we aim to live a life fully pleasing to him in just these few words it is summed up so beautifully for us what we have in Christ these three wonderful things that are ours through faith and may God's words strengthen us and help us to go on living for him knowing and reminding ourselves of what is ours in Christ let us pray God's I'm we're all we're we're all we're we offer to be we're we're we're going to