

The Life of Faith and Salvation as God's Gift

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[0 : 00] Let's turn together now to Paul's letter to Colossians and chapter 1 and we're going to read at verse number 12.! Colossians 1 at verse number 12.

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 will redemption the forgiveness of sins.

And so on. As we reflect on this letter and the purpose of its writing, we can simply note that Paul was writing this letter to the church in Colossae from his imprisonment in Rome.

And he was doing so because of his love and care for them and because of his concern. And as I read through into chapter 2, we recognize something of the concern that he had.

[1 : 07] He speaks about philosophies and vain deceit. He speaks about these things deluding you with plausible arguments. So he was concerned that their life of devotion to Jesus Christ was under threat because of the things that were being said and happening around them.

And when we reflect on that also and think of what he says in chapter 2 and verse 8 of being taken into captivity by these philosophies, it reminds us that we are not immune to the influences of the world around us.

And we may ask ourselves today, how much does what happens in the world around us affect us in our faith and affect us in our thinking?

And we might respond and say, it doesn't affect me at all. But the reality is that it's impossible to live in such a world without being affected in some way by what is happening around us.

Perhaps the greatest and strongest movement that happens around us in our culture and our society is the movement of secularism, which is designed to separate Christianity and religion from every area of life.

[2 : 33] And one of the means of doing that is to remove the teachings of salvation and to, in a sense, as some of the writers say, in a sense, put God into retirement so that he simply is not part of life.

And these are something of the challenges that we face in the world in which we live. And as you read these words, we see the way in which Paul addresses that.

And he does so not by asking them to show what they have done. He addresses it by showing what God has done. And the only way for us to understand who we are today and what we are, and the only way in which the anxiety and the fears of our faith, or even coming to faith, is going to be removed, is if we have God's perspective on our salvation that transforms.

So as we want to think about today, I want to think of the life of faith and salvation as God's gift. I want to think, first of all, of a gracious transformation.

God brings about change. That's what we have in verse number 12, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

[4 : 07] Here is one of the great challenges that we face in coming to faith and even in living by faith.

That we think we are not qualified. We think we are not suitable. We think we are not good enough. We think we don't have the characteristics that make us the children of God.

And these very things stop us in coming to faith, and it holds us back in the life of faith. It's all about ourselves and what we are, and especially what we are not.

And when you think of what we are not, then it paralyzes us on any kind of walk or journey with God. What is the answer to that? Paul's answer and God's answer is that it is God who qualifies us.

And that's what he is saying in these words. God makes the Colossians suitable with the right character, fit and ready for what he is going to describe.

[5 : 19] He makes them appropriate and suitable people for a particular cause. He has mentioned in verse 10 of walking in a man that's worthy of the Lord.

That is the outer characteristic of the life of faith. But this is talking about who we are as the people of God and what God himself has made us.

And we reflect on the wider teaching of the Bible, and we understand that God has done that because of his grace. That we are the unworthy ones.

We are not suitable or fitting. And Paul himself describes himself as somebody who was unworthy to be called an apostle. He knew that he wasn't the person.

He knew that because of who he was, he could not be. And in fact, what he was disqualified him from being. But now he recognizes that God qualified him and that God now qualifies them.

[6 : 29] It's a reminder to them that their sufficiency, their suitability is always the work of God. And today for us all, that is good news.

If you're anything like me, there will be many times in the working week when you will face the truth about yourself and you will begin to, there will be a process of unbelief that gains energy through that thought process and it robs you of any sense of peace and of the assurance of God.

And the only answer to that is for a window to open so that what God thinks comes down, that what the work of God, that God has completed, that that will come home in power and it transforms, it changes my outlook on myself, it changes my view of God's grace and to my view of the person of the Lord Jesus.

The heavenly perspective that God as our Father does it for us. And we should not spend our time thinking as we so often do and hearing as we so often hear that we're not good enough, that we're not ready because of a variety of reasons.

It's not your doing. It's the doing of God our Father and in a moment He makes you suitable. He gives you the right character and the right standing.

[8 : 11] And that right standing is to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. The light is the light of God's kingdom.

Jesus is the light of the world. We were in darkness without salvation. Now we are in the light of life. In the promise of a new exodus in the prophecy of Isaiah from chapter 42 onwards, there is the saints of Jesus, the servant of God, being sent as a light to the Gentiles.

And there is a sense of those who are saved by God brought into this existence of life and of light. And that whole sense of inheritance which was based so much geographically in the Old Testament on Jerusalem where the temple was and that whole promised land now becomes the new heavens and the new earth that God has promised.

It is where righteousness will reign. It is where right relationships will be in place. It is that new covenant that God has promised to put into place so that my inheritance is now that eternal inheritance into which Christ Himself has entered and into which He will at last bring His people.

[9 : 41] The inheritance of the saints in light. In other words, He has made us participants in His own kingdom.

The saints, those who are set apart as His own holy people, set apart for His service. And we may ask today, how do I become a Christian?

We may ask today, how can I know that I am one of the children of God? And the answer is straightforward and simple. God will make me a child of His own.

In a moment of His grace, He will change me and He will give me that right to the inheritance, not just of the people of God in this world, but the final inheritance of the people of God in the glory of the new heavens and the new earth, that paradise restored and regained.

The grace of transformation. The heavenly perspective on who we are today.

[10 : 58] Ought we not be still and rejoice that this is the Father that we have? That He's not a Father that gives us a long list of to-do things and on completion of these to-do things that then He will accept us into His kingdom.

He accepts us as we are. He changes us. And then He gives us the to-do list. Then He gives us the life of service. But our entrance into His kingdom to be part of His people is by His grace alone.

The gracious transformation. Secondly, there is a gracious transfer. There's a from and there's a to. There's a place where we were and there's a place to which He has taken us. And that's what we have in verse number 13. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness.

Our life outside of faith in Jesus Christ is lived in the domain of darkness. There is an authority working in that domain.

[12 : 20] There is a power operative in that domain. And it's a power that has huge influence over your heart and your life and mine. It is a domain where there is power.

It is the domain of darkness. darkness. And in that darkness, we know that Satan reigns. We know that he is the prince of this world.

We see from reading in Ephesians that we do not wrestle with flesh and blood. There is the sense of the cosmic powers and the rulers of darkness.

It's a place where we're under authority. Where we're slaves of sin. Where we live a life that's disconnected from God.

A life that has lived pleasing yourselves and living in the service of sin. And it is fair to say that that is where we will remain unless God takes the action that will remove us from there.

[13 : 32] And that's exactly what he is saying to the cross and he has done. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness. A deliverance that speaks to us of the historical deliverance of the people of God from Egypt in the book of Exodus.

That God is the one who promised to bring you out from the Egyptians. That God is the one who will deliver you from slavery to them. That God is the one who will redeem you with an outstretched arm and will take you and bring you to be my own people.

The historical event of the Exodus in the life of the children of Israel becomes a spiritual experience in the life of those whom God is saving.

He is rescuing, he is delivering, he is taking out from and he is bringing people out of in order to be in a place of security.

and this is the very rescue, deliverance that we have need of.

[14 : 49] It is a freedom from the power that dominates in our lives. and such is the dominion of the authority that reigns in the sphere of darkness that today we can be in that darkness and not in the least bit aware that we are in it.

Contentment in the domain of darkness is one of the devil's key influences in life that I can settle my life and live my life unaware of where I am not realizing that I am in the place of danger.

And that is why it takes nothing less than the intervention of God to take me out from there.

I will never leave that place unless God does something. And God our Father that is exactly what he does.

He intervenes and he transfers us to the kingdom of his beloved son. It's not as if he takes us from darkness and then we are in limbo and then at some other point in life he places us into his kingdom.

[16 : 27] There is no such limbo in the journey of a sinner from being lost to being in God's kingdom. The exodus from the place of darkness is in fact the entrance into the kingdom of God.

God it's deliverance by transfer in that moment in that instant. It may not seem like that in our experience when it happens but our experience is not our Bible.

The word of God as it speaks into life that's how we understand what happens deliverance. And that's what God is saying here. He is transferring out of darkness into the kingdom of his dear son.

And in the Greek world that kind of deliverance would be the action of the king. The king who is transplanting a people group from being in one place to another region.

taking them out of where they were and to give them the right of citizenship of living in another region. And to close taking them out of being under the jurisdiction of the person in one region to be under the jurisdiction of the person in the other region.

[18 : 00] It is the work of the king. And who is our king? God our father is our king. But the Lord Jesus is the king of kings and lord of lords.

He is the one who takes us out from. He is the one who leads us and brings us into the kingdom that is named after himself, the kingdom of God's beloved son.

That place where there is the powerful dynamic of God himself reigning. God being over everything that happens in the kingdom.

God acting every day in his sovereign power in the life of his people. God ruling over them and God reigning over them and God blessing them because of his love and his grace and because of his desire for their good.

From darkness into the kingdom of his beloved son. And a kingdom so described is a kingdom that draws us always back to the place where our standing in the kingdom of God is because of the love of God.

[19 : 36] Because of the love of God in choosing and in electing. Because of the love of God in sending his son. And because of the love of his son in giving himself.

It is the kingdom of his dear son belongs to him. It is based on his own finished work as person and work. The son who loved lovingly gave himself so that we the unloved ones and the unloving ones would become the loving children of God.

All because of what Jesus has done. And Paul rightly says in Philippians chapter 3 and speaking of his own struggles and speaking of the sense of belonging to this final kingdom knowing that he hadn't yet arrived there but knowing that's where he was going he was able to say that our citizenship is already in heaven the place from which we expect the son of God to return the heavenly perspective that we are already citizens of the kingdom of God and we know that one of the challenges and one of the things that undermines our sense of assurance in God is the sense of there still being a struggle there still being an awareness of the power of darkness and how it can influence our lives and our thinking the struggle that we have daily because of the sense of that power where

Paul reminds us that we need the whole armor of God to be able to stand being taken out of the domain of darkness does not mean that we lose forever any sense of being there or any sense of its influence on life we live as God's people constantly facing the challenges of a dark world because we are the citizens of God's kingdom because we do belong to God's family and one of the indications of our belonging so often is that we are aware!

soldiers in a battle and we stand firm with the armour that God gives to us the heavenly perspective that we are already citizens of God's kingdom and thirdly there is a gracious transaction how can God do this or what has God done that actually undergirds everything that Paul has said where does all this bring us it brings us to this great preposition in whom at the beginning of verse 14 who is the preposition referring to it's referring to God's beloved son and recognizing that all that we have as the children of

[23 : 19] God is bound up in this little preposition which reminds us that we are united to Christ that we are in the body of Christ that we are part of his body!

that we are not simply those who walk with him but that we are those who are in him so that all that he has done is for us so that all that he is we are it's more than simply sharing what I've got with others it's putting me in that place where all my rights are the rights that he has and where the inheritance that he has is the inheritance that I have in him and nowhere is the supremacy that Paul goes on to speak of in chapter 2 what do we have in him on this occasion what is it that makes the big difference we have redemption there is the release by having a price paid the son of man came to serve and to give himself his life a ransom for many the cost was his willing self sacrifice his death on the cross he endured he suffered the wrath of

God he paid the price that was required for our redemption to set us free and as he redeemed his people from Israel with an outstretched arm and led them with a steadfast love we see in the cross of Jesus that he secured and established our freedom in his death and on the mount of transfiguration in Luke chapter 9 they spoke of the exodus that Jesus was going to accomplish in Jerusalem his cross the way in which his death was going to open up the way so that the captives are set free so those in prison emerge from that prison and so they enter into the freedom of the children of

God in whom we have redemption today if we have been given by the grace of God to have the status of his children as the citizens of his kingdom if we have been transformed to make a suitable for his kingdom then Christ Jesus his passion and work will be at the center of life and will be precious to the extent that we will not let anything come between us and him that we will strive to ensure that no cloud will darken our appreciation of all that he has done the one who loved me and gave himself for me greater love has no one would lay down his life for his friends and he did this for the forgiveness of sin for the removal of the obstacle between ourselves and

God and there is a book written about sinners to be regained and in that book there is brought to our attention two key things about sin and I spoke at the very beginning of the introduction to our sermon about the influence of our culture upon our thinking as the children of God and the first of these is that because God has been shut out largely of the thinking of the society in which we live

that our view of sin has changed completely and we now see sin and aware of sin in our relationships with others because the culture has disconnected us from God and when we do sin it leads us to shame before others and so it should but it stops in that place which means that if I sin and others are not aware of it then

[28 : 47] I'm okay nobody knows and there's no shame and I can carry on my sin I can accommodate sin in my life as soon as I shut the window on God and don't let his light shine into my heart we can fall into that trap and we can be influenced to a great degree by what is happening in the culture around us but what brings about the change it is what Paul was asking for here it is that sense of a heavenly perspective on our whole experience in this world and as soon as our heavenly perspective of sin is impressed upon our hearts then introduces something that was not there before and that something that it introduces is guilt before a holy

God and there is a difference a huge difference that if I can shut God out of my thinking then sin changes and in many ways sin no longer exists in the way that the Bible teaches us that it does and the challenge for you and for me is to have our thinking and our understanding of sin based upon the teaching of the word of God and not upon what society is trying to impress upon our minds and that becomes a challenge in our everyday living but it also becomes a challenge under the preaching of the gospel because today if my sin is no more than something that brings me shame to those around me then the gospel will not mean a lot to me but if my sin means that I'm guilty before a holy God then the gospel is alive then the person who who in whom we have redemption is really precious and meaningful!

He becomes the center focus in life He is the person I must know and need to know so that I can have forgiveness because the forgiveness that God gives is to set in motion my sin in such a way that I'm no longer condemned because of it but that I am set free by His saving grace God away and the prophet Micah speaks about our sins and what happens to our sins in chapter number seven that you cast all our sins into the depths of the sea Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world let's not underestimate sin let's not be deceived into accommodating sin let's see our sin the way

God sees it a heavenly perspective upon sin and then we will appreciate the heavenly perspective on God's grace and salvation that He does it transforming that He does it transferring and that He does it based on this transaction and may God help us today to reflect on where they were as a church to reflect on where we are individually and personally and to ensure that what steers our understanding is not what we think ourselves it's not what others think it's what God says and what God thinks and how God judges may God bless his word let us pray most gracious God we do rejoice in you you are the God who is moved in your heart to save a people for yourself in the mystery of the freedom of your eternal will you have purpose to save us we marvel that you made such a choice we give thanks to you that everything that happens afterwards is based upon all that you do in the first place and we are thankful to you for every step that you took to rescue and to deliver us to make us the children of

God and we pray that you bless us in our hearts today in the knowledge that we are your children not because of what we have done but entirely because of what you have done hear our prayer and accept us for Jesus sake Amen the closing psalm is psalm 28 in the Scottish Psalter it's on page 238 and we're singing the last four verses of the psalm psalm 28 at verse number six forever blessed be the Lord for graciously heard the voice of my petitions and prayer did regard number six to the end of the psalm and the tune is Marvin forever blessed be the Lord for graciously he heard the voice of my petition and with years did we are the

[34 : 52] Lord my strength and she shield heart up or ended we lie and I am it ends my heart that joy makes he ring and with my song I him and strength is gone alone also is the saving strength!

saving strength of anointed! O thine own do people sin bless impenet times then what so do thou feed thine for forever more at hand after indiction I'll go to the main door the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more Amen thank you