

Paul's Prayer (Part 3)

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[0 : 00] So, tonight is our third and final lesson looking at Paul's prayer in Colossians 1, 9-14.

Let's go ahead and read those verses again before doing some review of the last two weeks.! Paul wrote, 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, being 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. For some quick review of the last couple of weeks, let's just remember what we saw.

In the first part of verse 9, we saw the pattern recurring. The last part of verse 9 showed us the petition requested. Those were things that we covered two weeks ago.

We saw then that Paul wanted his readers to be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. He wanted his readers to have this knowledge and understanding so that they would have all the wisdom necessary for making decisions and living to please God.

[1 : 42] Last week, we saw the pleasing results. These are the things that believers do to please God. Paul didn't give us a complete list of what pleases God, but he gave us enough to know what we should do.

Verses 10 and 12 showed us that we please God when we are walking in a manner worthy of the Lord, bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God. We also saw that we please God by giving thanks to God because He has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints.

The inheritance there refers to the blessings reserved for Christians, and this particular statement refers to God the Father's activity of calling His people to their promised inheritance.

The same idea is found back in verse 5 of chapter 1, that there is a hope reserved for Christians in heaven. God's initiative guarantees that His people will be able to inherit what is promised to them. Before our salvation, we were dominated by the evil world system, and of course its wicked ruler, Satan, and our own fallen sinful human natures.

[2 : 50] So we were Christless, covenantless, hopeless, and godless. Our minds were given over to futility, our understanding was darkened, and we were cut off from the life of God.

But a lot of times we didn't know it because we were also ignorant, hard-hearted, callous, immoral, impure, and greedy. The only thing we were qualified to receive then from God was His wrath, and that is what we would have received if not for God's mercy toward us.

God has qualified the unqualified to share in His inheritance, and the Greek text there literally reads, for the portion of the lot. It means that we each receive our own individual allotment or portion of the total inheritance.

Paul here is talking about the partitioning of Israel's inheritance in Canaan. Just as the Israelites received their allotment in the promised land, we also receive our portion of the divine inheritance. Then verse 11 last week told us why we can walk worthy of the Lord and please God. We can please God because He strengthens us with all power according to His glorious might.

[4 : 02] And with this strength, we can even endure trials with joy. We talked about how the sequence is important. First we have wisdom of what God wants and what He's provided.

Then we walk with that wisdom, and then we work. I can't walk with God unless I am, or I can't work for God, I mean unless I am walking with Him.

And I can't walk with Him if I don't know His will. The believer who spends time daily in the Word of God and prayer will know God's will and be able to walk with Him and then be able to work with Him.

Walk, of course, is used in the Bible to refer to a pattern of daily conduct, a mind controlled by knowledge, wisdom, and understanding produces a life worthy of the Lord.

We talked about how this seems impossible, but that's the teaching of Scripture that we are supposed to walk worthy of God. When we're filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, we are able to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

[5 : 07] That means we're able to bear fruit, and we can learn more about God too, and we'll be strengthened with all power. That's why we can have patience and joy during trials, and that's why we can give thanks to God for what He's done for us, and also what He will do for us in the future.

And of course, one of the things for which we should be thankful is the inheritance that He has promised us. So everything ties back to the knowledge of God and His will, and of course we do that through the study of Scripture.

Verses 13 and 14 are the verses that we'll cover tonight, and they remind us why we can be confident that we have the promised inheritance. These verses summarize the permanent redemption.

The permanent redemption is the first thing that we'll look at, and this permanent redemption is the ultimate reason why Christians should want to live a life that is pleasing to God.

The permanent redemption also is the main reason why we should be thankful. Listen to verses 13 and 14 again. Paul's talking about God here, and he says, 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.

[6 : 24] We'll break this section of Scripture down phrase by phrase, starting with, He has delivered us from the domain of darkness. Delivered there is translated from a word which means to draw to oneself or to rescue.

So delivered means to draw to oneself or to rescue. God drew us out of Satan's kingdom to himself, and that event, of course, was the new birth.

We're not gradually, progressively delivered from Satan's power. When we placed our faith in Christ, we were instantly delivered. 2 Corinthians 5, 17, and 18 support that.

They say, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself.

Notice that 2 Corinthians 5, 17 says that anyone in Christ is a new creation. The change already has been made.

[7 : 33] Just like he told the Colossians in our text tonight, Paul also told the Corinthians that all of this change is from God. As much as we would like to think that we have done something to deserve salvation, the Bible makes it clear that we had nothing to deserve salvation.

Our salvation actually is completely because of God's grace, and we see here that God is the one who delivered us. The concept of deliverance that's brought to fulfillment in the New Testament was foretold in the Old Testament, and here are just a couple of examples of that.

The Old Testament experience of Israel was deliverance from the tyranny of Pharaoh and transference eventually to the kingdom of David. And then, of course, on Sunday mornings in the book of Hosea, we're studying another picture of God's deliverance.

God told his prophet Hosea to rescue Hosea's sinful wife from the slave market and bring her back to the family home. For believers, though, God has delivered us from something even worse than bondage in Israel or from a rotten slave market.

God has delivered us from the domain of darkness. And we touched on the domain of darkness already, but let's talk about it in more detail. The domain of darkness is the realm of Satan and the powers of evil.

[8 : 57] Domain of darkness is found in the Old Testament, too, referring to both sin and oppression. Often it's contrasted with deliverance provided by God, just like it is here in our Colossians text tonight.

Remember how Isaiah 9-2 referenced darkness in the well-known prophecy of the coming Messiah. Isaiah 9-2 says, The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shone. Matthew Henry said, In our verses here in Colossians tonight, Paul is doing exactly what Jesus called Paul to do. Listen to these verses from Acts 26 and their verses 15-18. In these verses, Paul is recounting to King Agrippa what Jesus said to him on the Damascus road during Paul's conversion experience. So here are Acts 26, 15-18. Jesus told Paul in part, Rise and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and a witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

[10:49] Verse 18 is the verse to hone in on there. Paul was commissioned so that people will turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. So here's a key takeaway from the first part of Colossians 1.13.

Believers do not need deliverance from sin anymore. They don't need deliverance from Satan either. They just need to act like those who have been delivered. That's a key thing to remember. Believers do not need deliverance from sin and Satan. They need to act as those who have been delivered. Paul said something similar to that to the believers in Rome.

Listen to Romans 6.11. Romans 6.11 says, So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

If God had stopped there for believers, he still would have done more for us than we deserve. But he not only rescued us, he also transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

[11:54] And we see that from the final part of verse 13. So let's look at the last part of the verse first. Beloved Son is a stunning description of Jesus because he is the one who became the object of the Father's wrath.

So you might be asking, how can this be? Because if the Father truly loved the Son, surely he wouldn't have exposed him to such horrific suffering. So how can the Son be beloved of the Father and yet also be the object of his wrath and judgment?

But that's really the glorious thing and the soul-saving thing and the mystery of the substitutionary atonement that we have as Christians. The beloved Son suffering for us is possible because both the Son and the Father are united in their love for the elect and together they entered into a covenant to redeem them from their sins.

This could only be accomplished by the Son willingly and freely offering himself as a substitute who wholly absorbed the wrath of God in our place.

And he died for the people who actually deserved that wrath. So because Jesus absorbed God's wrath that we deserve, we have been transferred into his kingdom.

[13:09] The original word translated transferred is more dramatic than it first sounds. To be transferred actually suggests the notion of being uprooted from one kingdom and transplanted into another.

So it's a more violent act. It's a more dramatic act because you're transferred from one kingdom or uprooted from one kingdom and put into another. So the verb speaks of our total removal from the domain of satanic darkness and being placed into the glorious light of the kingdom of Christ.

The same verb was used in Acts 13.22 where they talked about God removing Saul from being king back in the Old Testament. And it was used in the ancient world to speak of the displacement of a conquered people to another land.

More good news for us though is that Jesus Christ did not release us from bondage only to have us wander aimlessly. He moved us into his own kingdom of light and made us victors over Satan's kingdom of darkness.

Think about this. Earthly rulers transported the defeated people that Jesus Christ transported the winners. And we're winners because he made us the winners out of that.

[14:27] So let that last part sink in. Earthly rulers transported defeated people. Jesus Christ transported the winners who are now part of his kingdom. Had Jesus not satisfied the wrath of the Father we'd still be under the dominion of darkness.

We'd still be held captive in our sins and subject to the authority of the one who hates us. But thanks be to God and we should be joyful and wholehearted about this thanks too because he has a great and unimaginable cost to himself and his beloved son taken us out of the grip of Satan and

now he embraces us with an eternal and irrevocable love.

So that definitely is something to be thankful for and that's why you see Paul urging the Colossians to be thankful. Let's talk a little bit about what Paul means when he talks about the kingdom.

Kingdom refers to more than a future millennial kingdom when Jesus will reign on earth for a thousand years. It doesn't speak only of the general rule of God over his creation.

The kingdom is a spiritual reality right now and Paul gives us a definition of the kingdom in Romans 14.17. Romans 14.17 is where Paul wrote For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

[15:58] Did you hear the present tense of Paul's words there in Romans 14.17? He said the kingdom is a matter of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

For believers, we're already part of that kingdom. That's something to remember as we continue to go through some struggles here on earth. The kingdom is the special relationship men in this age have with God through Jesus Christ.

Of course, in its most basic sense, a kingdom is a group of people who are ruled by a king.

Christians, of course, have acknowledged Jesus Christ as their king and have become subjects in his kingdom.

They've been transferred, as we've seen, to the kingdom of his beloved son. And beloved son there also could be translated the son of his love. So the father gives the kingdom to the son that he loves and then to everyone who loves the son.

For proof that the father gives the kingdom to everyone who loves the son, listen to Luke 12.32.

And these words are from Jesus himself.

[17:05] He said, Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. So not only does God give believers the kingdom, we see that it is his good pleasure to do it.

In other words, he enjoys giving believers the kingdom. Of course, Jesus Christ, the one into whose kingdom we have been transferred, is also the one and the only one in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

That, of course, comes from verse 14. The word redemption belongs to the slave market.

Redemption involves the payment of a price to secure freedom.

And Paul clearly identifies that price as the death of Christ. Colossians 1.14 echoes what Paul says in Romans 3.23 and 24.

Those verses say, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

[18:14] People today tend to avoid speaking about sin. Often when somebody does something wrong or even commits a crime, they're dismissed as having a disease or some type of dysfunction.

But the Bible speaks forthrightly about sin, and it says that the people need to be forgiven of that sin because the wages of sin is death. The only release comes from the forgiveness of God based upon the death of his son.

Paul stressed the fact that God initiated redemption and that Jesus' death was the necessary price of salvation. Sin produces an objective problem, and God's justice demands satisfaction because God cannot tolerate sin.

The objective problem has to be resolved by some type of salvation, and by his death and resurrection, Jesus met the holy demands of God's law. Satan seeks to accuse us and imprison us because he knows we are guilty of breaking God's law, but the ransom has already been paid on Calvary through faith in Jesus Christ, and because of that faith and because of what Jesus did on Calvary, we have been set free.

We should be amazed by the redemption that we see detailed in the New Testament. But we shouldn't be surprised. That's because the Old Testament is full of examples and pictures of redemption.

[19:46] We're going to do a little bit of a Bible drill here to show you just how many times the Old Testament talks about redemption, and we won't even look at all of them. The Exodus from Egypt is a primary example of God's redemption of Israel from servitude, and of course, they became his people.

Listen to Moses' words to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 7, 6-8. Deuteronomy 7, 6-8 are where Moses said, For you are a people holy to the Lord your God.

The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Notice that the redemption of Egypt or Israel from Egypt was accomplished by God's might. And that should sound familiar because we saw last week how Colossians 1-11 told us that believers are strengthened with power according to his glorious might.

[21 : 10] Here are a few more Old Testament examples of redemption. Israel was to redeem people and property that could not otherwise be freed.

Listen to Leviticus 25 verses 47-49. If a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich and your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner with you or to a member of the stranger's clan, then after he is sold, he may be redeemed.

One of his brothers may redeem him or his uncle or his cousin may redeem him or a close relative from his clan may redeem him or if he grows rich, he may redeem himself.

A few months ago, we looked at the book of Ruth and of course, that book of Ruth gives us a real-life picture of the kinsman redemption that is described in these verses. Provisions also were made for people to go free from imprisonment and of course, they went free by being redeemed. Here's what Exodus 21-30 says about that. It says, If a ransom is imposed on him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is imposed upon him.

[22 : 30] Redemption is also seen in the Old Testament through Silas' decree for the Israelites to be restored. And Cyrus decreed that in Ezra 1-111 and there, redemption is attributed to God in an Exodus-like manner.

Isaiah chapter 45 recaps Cyrus' directive for the exiles to be restored. Listen to the last two verses of Isaiah 45. These verses are Isaiah 45-24 and 25.

Only in the Lord it shall be said of me our righteousness and strength. To him shall come and be ashamed all who were incensed against him.

In the Lord all the offspring of Israel shall be justified and shall glory. Earlier in Isaiah, God's words reminded the Israelites of the redemption that they have in God.

These verses are Isaiah 43, verses 1-4. Isaiah wrote, But now thus says the Lord, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel, fear not, for I have redeemed you.

[23 : 44] I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you.

Because you are precious in my eyes and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. Just a side note about this passage.

Notice that it doesn't say, If you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned. It's very clear that that will happen.

It says, When you pass through the waters, and when you walk through the fire, rather than if. So these are just a few of the examples of redemption, and how it's foretold in the Old Testament.

[24 : 48] We already mentioned Hosea, and of course that's another example that we could add here too. But with these examples and others, we clearly see from the Old Testament that God was telling his people about a greater redemption to come.

As good as our redemption is, we have even more than just redemption. Colossians 1.14 reminds us that we also have the forgiveness of sins.

The forgiveness of sins also was foretold in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 43.25, God says, I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

Let's not jump away from that verse too quick because it tells us why God blots out our transgressions. He doesn't do it for our sake. He does it for His own sake.

That's a big difference there. And when we confess our sin and plead the blood of the Lord Jesus, God promises never again to bring it up either to Himself, to you, or to others.

[25 : 58] So that's real forgiveness. How many people have been in a situation where somebody says that they forgive you but the second time something goes wrong they bring up what they supposedly had forgiven you for before?

They forgive, they don't forget. That's exactly right. There's a big difference there between forgiveness and forgetting. We see though with God when He forgives us He doesn't bring it up again.

Let's look at a few more Old Testament examples to emphasize God's forgiveness even more. Hezekiah put it this way in Isaiah 38, 17. He said, Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness but in love you, talking about God, have delivered my life from the pit of destruction for you have cast all my sins behind your back.

So the thing to remember there is what we've already said. God has taken your sin and placed it out of His sight behind His back. All He sees now when He sees a Christian is the blessed righteousness of His own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's the love of forgiveness. And here's one more Old Testament summary of God's forgiveness. It comes from Micah 7, verses 18 and 19.

[27 : 18] Micah 7, verses 18 and 19 say, Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of His inheritance?

He does not retain His anger forever because He delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities underfoot.

And then He switches tense there. He says, You will cast our sins into the depths of the sea. That's pretty comforting to think, isn't it, that God is going to cast our sins into the depths of the sea?

David summarized how we should feel about God's forgiveness in Psalm 32. Listen to Psalm 32, 1 and 2. David wrote, Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. All hope for happiness is contingent on the forgiveness of sins.

[28 : 25] The word blessed in Psalm 32, by the way, is plural. Charles Spurgeon said, Oh, the blessedness, the double joys, the bundles of happiness, the mountains of delight that abound to the forgiven.

Redemption and forgiveness go together. The word translated forgiveness here means to send away or to cancel a debt.

Christ has not only set us free and transferred us to a new kingdom, but he's canceled every debt so that we can't be enslaved again. Satan can't find anything in the files that will indict the true believer.

God's forgiveness of sinners is an act of his grace. We did not deserve to be forgiven, nor can we earn that forgiveness. But knowing that we are forgiven makes it possible for us to fellowship with God, enjoy his grace, and seek to do his will.

Forgiveness is not an excuse for sin. Instead, it's an encouragement for obedience. And because we've been forgiven, we should be able to forgive others.

[29 : 40] We'll talk about it more next week, but Jesus Christ is preeminent in salvation. No other person could redeem us, forgive us, or transfer us out of Satan's kingdom into God's kingdom and do it wholly by his grace.

Moses and the Israelites only had to shed the blood of a lamb to be delivered from Egypt, that Jesus had to shed his blood to deliver us from sin.

The Bible clearly indicates that there are two and only two spiritual realms. Every person belongs in one or the other. There aren't multiple religious options, each of equal saving value.

Those who do not yet know Jesus Christ are in the realm of darkness subject to the authority and power of Satan. The Apostle John said it in unmistakable terms when he declared in 1 John 5, 19, that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

By the whole world there, John means everyone and everything that is not in Christ by faith. We have to remember, though, when we see it every day, that few, if any, who are under the authority of Satan and are walking in spiritual darkness feel as if they are.

[31 : 00] If anything, they're actually persuaded that they live in light and freedom and power. In fact, though, they're utterly blind in bondage to the enemy and powerless to free themselves by their own efforts.

So, if you ever needed a good reason to share the gospel with an unsaved neighbor or co-worker in the office, this is it. Don't be misled by what appears to be worldly success.

People sometimes think burgeoning careers, civil behavior, or the respect of their peers, along with fancy backyard barbecues, and children who do well on the ACT are all indicators of success.

But really, if those people don't know Christ, they're still in the power of the evil one, energized by the domain of darkness. Just for them and also for us, there's only one hope, and that's the forgiveness of sins that's found only in Jesus Christ.

Paul says that we should give thanks joyfully to the Father because we were once as they are. So, if we're ever tempted to think that we're better than what the unsaved people are, we need to remember that if not for the grace of God, we would still be like them because we were once as they are.

[32 : 21] We've spent three weeks looking at this passage that actually all fits together as one thought, and we did that because the passage has so much to teach us.

The risk you have there, though, in breaking apart one passage over three weeks is that you can easily lose sight of the big picture. After three weeks of detail, here's a paragraph summary of the passage from John MacArthur, and he wrote, Christ's death on our behalf paid the price to redeem us.

On that basis, God forgave our sins, granted us an inheritance, delivered us from the power of darkness, and made us subjects of Christ's kingdom. These wonderful truths should cause us to give thanks to God continually, as did Paul in his prayer.

And when we contemplate all he has done for us, how can we do any less than pray to be filled with the knowledge of his will? The key thing for us is to always remember that Jesus Christ, the one into whose kingdom we have been transferred, is also the one, the only one, in whom we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.

With that, let's go ahead and close in prayer. Father, we thank you for the reminder of the redemption and the forgiveness of sins that we have in Christ.

[33 : 48] Let that knowledge sink in and resonate with us so that we will become ever more thankful and even more willing to study your word and learn more about your will. Also, let it energize us to tell other people about your salvation so that you can use us to reveal other members of your kingdom, especially as we get ready to go out and engage the community here in a few weeks.

Be with us and keep us safe until we come back again on Sunday. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. .