

Colossians Part 1: Do You Know The Mystery?

Week 5: A Different Kind of Prayer, Part 2

Sunday, September 25, 2022

- **A few years ago I read a book where the author was exploring how there are things- wonderful things- perspectives, understanding, wisdom, things of the HEART- that God sincerely wants to give us... and yet we don't receive them. ONE OF THE BIG reasons we DON'T- reasons we miss out- is that to receive what God wants to give we first must TRUST God. Believe that what He says is true, is actually true- about him, about us, about other people, about the nature of His power and presence.**
- **Maybe we don't trust, we don't believe, because of pride. We have ourselves, our own resources, why compromise or surrender my own control to God?**
- **OR, perhaps, we've been hurt. Something happened to us, or is ongoing, that causes us to doubt God's existence, or, as people who DO believe in God, even Jesus Christ, we don't believe that God is good, that he can be trusted.**
- **In this thought the author gave an impactful illustration...**
- **LOST PUPPY- in hedge... obvious she is hungry, hurting... he's on his porch with bowl of food and water, and a deep heart to take this puppy and bring comfort, sustenance, healing, and a home. The invitation is made....**
- **But for the gift to be received, the puppy has to trust. Let go of it's hurt and fear, JUST ENOUGH to slowly approach and receive the love that is desiring to be given. The man isn't going to trick the dog, or force it to come to him. The dog must choose, and when it does, the gift of love and hope is waiting to be given.**

- **In a simple way, this is a picture of God's invitation for us to trust and enter into His love, his grace.**

- **This also illustrates an important concept of prayer we see in the NT.**
- **When we see the Spirit lead the writers of the NT to pray for the church, we can know THIS IS ...**

† A prayer God wants to answer

- **Last Sunday we looked at the first half of Paul's great pastoral prayer for the Colossians church- before we consider the rest, listen as we read the entire prayer.**
- **THINK- IN THE MIDST OF LIFE AS IT REALLY IS- what are the gifts we see that God desires to give, if we will have ears to hear, heart/faith, to trust...**

Colossians 1:9-14 *For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰ so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, ¹² and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

- **Friends, this is a prayer- a truth- that God desires to give, for us to receive and experience his goodness.**
- **SO, picking up where we left off, in verse 11, Paul prays that we would be...**

† Strengthened

Colossians 1:11a *being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might*

- **This is incredible thing to say. PAUL PRAYS that we- you and I- would know the strength of ALL God’s power and the might of His Glory. I mean, what does that even MEAN? How is this possible?**
- **AND, this isn’t some one-off Prayer, like Paul got a bit emotional- we see him pray the same thing in Ephesians, twice!**

Ephesians 1:19-20 *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms*

- **Did you catch that? The spirit led Paul to pray that we would know- in our own lives- the power of God that raised Christ from the dead. RESURRECTION POWER.**

Ephesians 3:16-19 *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

- **I think of this in my own life... HOW could a person like me, with my own weakness and frailty, begin to possess, experience, the fullness of the Power of God? And here’s the thing... I DON’T KNOW! I don’t have an answer... we could sit down with a stack of commentaries and come up with different theological possibilities, but when it comes down to it, this is part of the MYSTERY into which God calls us.**
- **BUT HERE’S WHAT WE CAN KNOW, with CERTAINTY- God calls us to PRAY this way- to pray for each other, that we would be strengthened with his power- that we would receive, BY FAITH, the grace we need for each day.**
- **A problem we have in Christian culture is we like to claim promises God hasn’t made. We are never promised life will be easy, or even that we will be delivered from our momentary troubles. But God HAS PROMISED to provide us the strength, the Grace, HIS POWER AND PRESENCE, for each day, for each step of life- for where we are in this moment, right now.**
- **If we look through the NT, we will see different purposes for trusting and receiving this strength God wants to give....**
 - **Know the fullness of God’s love**
 - **Strengthened in our faith (1 thess)**
 - **That we would persevere in struggles (1 Thess)**
 - **Strengthened in our words and deeds (2 Thess)**
 - **Protected from the influence of the enemy**
- **HERE, Paul prays these Colossians believers- and we- may know God’s strength so we may possess...**

✠ Endurance and patience

11b *strengthened with all power according to his glorious might.... so that you may have great endurance and patience,*

- *On the surface, this might make us a little nervous- if Paul prays we would have great endurance and patience, this means we are likely to face circumstances where we will need....*
- *Paul's point is we DO need endurance and patience! This is the nature of life, and God never asks us to pretend otherwise. WE PRETEND around each other, but God never asks us to pretend.*
- *NOW... subtle difference between endurance and patience- ENDURANCE is the power to persevere when dealing with challenging/difficult circumstances.... ENDURANCE in the midst of illness, work, things beyond our control...*
- *PATIENCE points to the power to persevere when dealing with difficult PEOPLE. And sometimes, we need patience in the midst of our endurance!*
- *POINT- this is practical- It's likely that Paul was thinking of the endurance and patience these first believer's would need in the face of false teaching and the persecution that would come in several years. BUT THIS PRINCIPLE reaches into all of life.*
- *When we set our hearts and minds on the miracle of what GOD HAS DONE, what is TRUE OF US AND FOR US, IN CHRIST... THIS will be a POWERFUL source of endurance, patience, faithfulness, and peace.*
- *Remember what Jesus said to his disciples on the night he was arrested...*

John 14:26-27 *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

16:33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

- *NOW, having prayed the believer will know a supernatural source of endurance and patience, Paul prays something completely counter-intuitive- at least from a human perspective.*
- *There are multiple things counter-intuitive about NT teaching- and this just might be the...*

† **The central counter-intuitive**

- *THAT in the midst of circumstances that require GREAT endurance and patience, we will be filled with GRATITUDE AND JOY.*

Colossians 1:12a *and giving joyful thanks to the Father*

- *Again, this isn't a one-off statement by Paul- this is one of the great themes- commands- of the NT when it comes to our ongoing relationship with God... Perhaps most famous example is scripture we looked at last week....*

Philippians 4:6 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (right before... rejoice always!)*

- *Something we need to acknowledge here- there are times when this seems not just impossible, but absurd. Maybe angering.*
- *In the past WEEK I've spoken with close friends- some in our church family- who have lost a parent, taken their child to the hospital in a crisis situation, described how they fear their child's marriage is collapsing, experiencing a crisis in their business, are facing surgery, dealing with deep depression, are about to move into their sixth temporary place to live in six weeks, I COULD GO ON. THINGS ARE HARD!*
- *And yet, in each of these circumstances- these believers have confessed- sometimes through tears and emotional agony- their deep, profound gratitude for the presence of God, and the HOPE they possess in Christ. And even though only one voiced it- because I know them, I know that also deep within them there is a taproot into the heart of God nourishing them with the powerful presence of a JOY and peace that is beyond understanding.*
- *YOU SEE, in our human nature our intuitive thought is that gratitude and joy are emotions we derive from positive circumstances. AND, in a temporary sense, they are.*
- *But the great counter-intuitive of hope in Christ is that gratitude and joy are precious gifts we possess in our hearts, like inexhaustible powercells that are brought to life by FAITH, bringing their very real light into our very real circumstances.*
- *And lest we think Paul is just all talk, he now prays that these believers- and YOU AND I- would understand the REASON we have such great REASON to be filled with gratitude and joy.*
- *As he concludes his prayer Paul describes four realities that are foundational to our patience, endurance, gratitude, and joy...*
- *The first is that when it comes to being part of the greater reality of God's Kingdom... we have been-*

✠ Qualified!

Colossians 1:12b giving joyful thanks to the father... *who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.*

- *EVEN for those of us who KNOW THIS, we have to pause, think, pray for understanding to begin to grasp just how miraculous this is.*
- *Core tenet of Biblical/NT theology is that in the human condition, apart from the mercy of God, ALL of humanity is separated from God, enslaved by the power of sin, and spiritually dead. This is the result of THE FALL, and the evidence is human history.*
- *THEN, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is the FULLNESS of God and the exact representation of God's being- he IS God... IN CHRIST God defeated death and made the way- opened the door, paved the road- for humanity to be reconciled to God- to be brought back into UNION with our creator, set free from the slavery of sin, and given NEW spiritual life.*

- **THIS IS THE INVITATION, the POSSIBILITY, that stands before all humanity. IN CHRIST, to be brought from DEATH TO LIFE- and not just for heaven when we die, but RIGHT NOW. Few scriptures not in your outline...**

1 Corinthians 15:22 *For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.*

Ephesians 1:9-11 *He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He set forth in Him (Christ),¹⁰ regarding His plan of the fullness of the times, to bring all things together in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.¹¹ In Him we also have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things in accordance with the plan of His will*

- **SO MUCH THERE! But do we hear the theme! Because of what GOD HAS DONE IN CHRIST, in the mystery of our surrender and response of faith, GOD HAS GIVEN OUR LIVES A NEW QUALITY- we have been qualified- BY GOD, to be born anew into His family. AND we have NO PLACE OF MORAL AND RELIGIOUS PRIDE- because this gift of our adoption into God's family is something GOD DID.**

Titus 3:3-4 *At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.*

- **FRIENDS- if we even begin to comprehend the reality, the magnitude of this miracle of God's grace- it will bring us to our knees in gratitude, and joy.**
- **SO- God has qualified us (Greek idea- 'made us fit') to receive, to enter into, an INHERITANCE.**

✠ Inheritance

Colossians 1:12b *who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.*

- **This is actually a HUGE NT concept. But just a few thoughts here- what is this inheritance?**
 - **It's not just personal. There's a temptation in Christian culture to think of our inheritance- our reward- as something God gives to us, and we possess for our benefit, in a very individualistic way. This is something that will be MINE.**
 - **But the image here- and throughout NT- is that our inheritance is COMMUNAL. It is SHARED. It is something we enter into with all other believers, the redeemed community together experiencing our participation in the presence of God.**
- **In one reality, this inheritance is in the future. It is, as we would say, the eternity awaiting us when we depart this earth and enter fully into the presence of God. THIS IS THE 'NOT YET' of our hope.**
- **But this inheritance is also the ALREADY- it is now..**
 - **Inheritance of a new source of living- we aren't bound to legalistic motivation, but the motivation of love- and if you think that sounds squishy, it's not.**
 - **Inheritance of contentment, if we will receive it**
 - **Inheritance of freedom- freedom to lay down our masks, to be ourselves, to stop performing for acceptance, freedom from fear and insecurity- again, if we will receive it, grow in it**

- *Inheritance of family of faith, the church- local, relational, community of people who love one another, serve together, make our lives better, even when we drive each other crazy.*
- *INHERITANCE of being the presence of God's goodness and love and kindness in this world- in the lives of people around us, our circle of influence.*

– **THEN PAUL SAYS THIS...**

Colossians 1:13 *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,*

– *In Christ, we have been...*

‡ **Rescued**

- **RESCUED... what does this word imply? THAT WE COULDN'T save ourselves. God took the initiative- we cooperated, but God made the rescue happen. HE DID IT- which leads to- if we CONSIDER IT, REMEMBER- a perspective of humility, gratitude, and joy.**
- **But we haven't just been rescued from darkness, we have been brought into LIGHT.**
- **SO MUCH- but simply- THE MIRACLE of salvation isn't just that we have been delivered from the consequence of sin. IT'S NOT just that we have been saved from hell! This is how the gospel has been presented by many for ages, but the great message of the Gospel is BOTH what we have been delivered from, and MUCH MORE the LIFE, the NEW REALITY we have been delivered INTO.**
- **Subtle note here... Paul says we were rescued from the DOMINION of darkness, and brought into the KINGDOM of the son he loves- the kingdom of Light. DOMINION and KINGDOM- these are not equal and opposite things. They are very different.**
- **DOMINION- in its use here, this is a power. An influence. It is a terrible power, it is DOMINATING, but it is a power without a home, and it's time is limited.**
- **You see, the dominion of darkness did not CREATE this world- it does not OWN this world, nor sustain this world. Satan and the curse of human brokenness has SWAY in this world, great power- but that is NOT THE LAST WORD.**
- **What we have been brought into isn't just a temporary dominion, it is a KINGDOM. It is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, who DID create this world, who DOES own this world, who DOES SUSTAIN this world, and in His time, will bring RESTORATION to this world.**
- **THINK BACK into early days of ACTS- at the end of his second sermon... "A TIME WILL COME FOR GOD TO RESTORE EVERYTHING, AS PROMISED LONG AGO THROUGH HIS HOLY PROPHETS" (3:21)**
- **This is our great hope- and this hope that IN CHRIST all of creation will be restored, this is also the hope of REDEMPTION- and Paul ends his prayer by reminding us that this redemption, our restoration to God, is something that has already happened.**
- **IN CHRIST, we have been redeemed.**

† Redeemed

Colossians 1:14 *in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

- **'Redeem' something means to gain possession of something in exchange for payment, the clearing of a debt- in a larger sense, the action of buying one's freedom.**
- **This is what Christ has done, and the debt paid is the forgiveness of sin. The way Paul says this is key- we 'HAVE REDEMPTION'- we possess it- it is now the state, the condition, in which we live. We haven't just BEEN forgiven, up to this point- IN CHRIST, we are FORGIVEN PEOPLE. Redemption isn't just something Christ did for us, it is a foundational part of our IDENTITY in Christ.**
- **NEXT WEEK our worship service will focus around the celebration of communion, and we will take the opportunity to explore what it means- the absolute magnitude of this truth- that in Christ- through what HE accomplished through his death and resurrection- that we are forgiven- that we are the redeemed.**
- **End with this- in the 1870's a young itinerant evangelist named Phillip Bliss wrote a hymn that would become a beloved confession of this great hope- it is still sung in many churches today, 150 years later.**

*I will sing of my Redeemer- And His wondrous love to me;
On the cruel cross He suffered- From the curse He set me free.*

*Sing, Oh sing of my Redeemer! With His blood, He purchased me,
On the cross, He sealed my pardon, Paid the debt, And made me free.*

- **This is OUR TRUTH- and in this prayer with which he opens his letter to the Colossian believers, Paul prays that they would KNOW, increasingly UNDERSTAND, and LIVE IN THE GOOD, the strength, gratitude, and JOY of this truth.**
- **May it be said of us.**