

“The Christian life can be lived in valleys and on mountaintops, but it’s mostly walked out on the flat plains. Most of our days are spent in the mundane, the ordinary, the routine. Such monotony can produce a sense of complacency or apathy toward the Lord. He can become yet another thing on our to-do list rather than the delight and joy of our existence.” So writes author Trillia Newbell in an article entitled “The breathtaking love we forget.”¹

She goes on. “You and I have a proneness to forget the greatest love in the world. It’s a love we cannot fully comprehend or imagine, and yet, practically, we forget that (God) loves us, pursues us, and we are his. As Robert Robertson put it in his great hymn “Come Thou Fount,” we are “prone to wander, Lord, I feel it.” The danger in our forgetfulness is that we can begin to think that our life is about us. We can begin to think that we’ve earned God’s favor through our goodness rather than by his grace. Or we can eventually forget the Lord altogether and live as if there isn’t One who is sustaining us; we can begin to live self-sufficiently.”

“Each day, each hour is a worthy fight to remember our greatest love in the world. One way for you and me to fight our temptation to wander toward lesser things is to remember the love and pursuit of God. Where might you be at today in your belief that God loves you and constantly pursues you? It is tempting to become complacent about God when our days are ordinary or routine. We run to God when there’s trouble. We may thank God on days of immense blessing. But most of life is ordinary which can lead to complacency towards God. Has any complacency or apathy towards the Lord settled into your heart? Maybe even now you’re saying “it’s not that big of a deal. I’m okay where I’m at and I don’t have time to do more religion.”

I get that. Sometimes the Christian life can seem like this big burden of many things to fit in to our already busy lives. But when we start thinking like that, we need to refocus on relationship with God.

¹<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-breathtaking-love-we-tend-to-forget>

Out of that relationship flows the other stuff. Just as married couples sometimes need to step back and remember their first love, we need to step back and remember God's acts of deep love for us.

One way to do this is to recapture a vision of God's actions on our behalf. Our journey through Colossians leads us there today. If you're a Christian, you will be reminded of some of God's loving acts for you. I pray we will see more clearly the breathtaking love of God for you. I pray this will move us to a renewed passion for Him and life. I pray if you are not a Christian you would see this kind of love God offers to you.

So please find Colossians 1 again – page 834 in the Bibles here. Our focus will be verses 12-14. But I want to read from verse 9 to give us context.

Colossians 1:9-14 (ESV)

⁹ 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, ¹⁰ 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; ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² giving thanks^[a] to the Father, who has qualified you^[a] to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Last week we saw Paul share a specific prayer request he brought to God on behalf of the Colossians. In verse 9 he writes, “we ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” We talked about the knowledge of God's will referring to His plans and purposes for the world through Jesus. Then we saw that Paul didn't just pray for them to gain knowledge. He prayed this knowledge would lead to God-pleasing lives. We saw four aspects of such a life; bearing fruit in every good work; increasing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might. This strength empowers us to endure difficult situations and show patience with difficult people. We ended last week in verse 11.

But in verses 12-14, Paul switches focus. He's no longer talking about prayer. He talks God's actions on behalf of Christians. In some ways, this prepares the reader for the “Christ hymn” of Colossians in verses 15-20. That section will paint a picture Jesus as the high and exalted Christ over everything. But verses 12-14 focus more on what God has done for us.

I would summarize them like this. **God delivered us from darkness so we can live in the light.**

If you are a Christian do you remembered that God brought out of darkness? I think we first need to talk about darkness.

If you asked people today, “do you think you’re living in darkness,” I think most would answer “No.” They might give you a weird look. Convinced modern secular people would argue they are the most enlightened people in all of history. They have escaped the darkness of old ways of thinking. They have escaped the shackles of religion. They have joined this brave new world of self-ruling individuals who redefine right and wrong for the better. If they knew that you were a Christian or you were religious, they would think you’re the one living in darkness. They might think, “You need to come and live in the light.”

Yet the Bible paints a completely different picture. Consider Jesus’ teaching. He talked about the devil and darkness. Well, Jesus talked about the devil. John Mark Comer, in his book “Live No Lies,” writes this. “Three times Jesus called the devil “the prince of this world.” The word for “prince” in Greek, was a political word in Jesus’ day, used for the highest-ranking Roman official in a city or region. Jesus was saying that this creature is the most powerful and influential creature in the world. In another story, when the devil claimed that “all the kingdoms of the world” were his to give away, Jesus didn’t disagree with him.”²

The devil was created by God as angel. The devil chose to rebel against God’s rule, to seize the world’s throne for himself and to enlist as many as possible against God. Humans later joined in the devil’s rebellion. Comer writes, “For thousands of years he has held sway as the “prince of this world” leading vast swaths of human and nonhuman creatures in their ongoing quest to seize autonomy from God and redefine good and evil as they saw fit.”³ Comer summarizes Jesus’ teaching on the devil in 3 simple points. 1- The devil is a real, immaterial, intelligent being. 2 - His end goal is to spread ruin in

² John Mark Comer, Live No Lies, (Colorado Springs, Waterbrook, 2021), 9.

³ Comer, 10,

our souls and society. 3 - His primary means is lies.⁴ If the devil is prince of this world, you could call his realm “darkness.” When Jesus was arrested He said this to the chief priests who were there. Luke 22:52-53 – “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour and the power of darkness.” “When darkness reigns.” So darkness is the realm where the devil rules as prince of the world.

The devil wages war against us through deception and lies especially about God. “God is not good. God does not want the best for you. You can be like God and define right and wrong for yourself. God has abandoned you.” The devil invites us to join in continuing rebellion against God.

Now the good news is Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil – 1 John 3:8. He came to set humanity free. He did this by resisting the devil’s temptations in the desert. He taught truth and cast out demons. He finally defeated the devil through his death, resurrection and exaltation. We will see in Colossians 2:15 that at the cross, “God disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in Jesus.”

So to appreciate the depth of love God has already shown us, Christians need to remember we used to live under darkness and the power of the devil. There was nothing that we could do to escape from this kingdom. There was no price that we could afford to pay. We were basically captives and slaves to darkness. Those apart from Christ are blind to this spiritual reality. Most people who live in darkness don’t think they live in darkness. That’s also a work of the devil. Listen to 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. Paul, the same guy who wrote Colossians writes, “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case, the god of this world (the devil), has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” Christians have been rescued from darkness. If you’re not a Christian, I pray the Spirit is opening the eyes of your heart to see this reality about your life.

⁴ Ibid. 20.

What did God do to deliver us from darkness? 1 – He qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Colossians 1:12 – “Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.” An inheritance is something passed along to someone’s heirs. Inheritance usually involved heritage. So if you were a child of a king, you could inherit a kingdom when the king died. Or if you are the child of a very wealthy person, you may inherit that wealth upon their death.

In Biblical history, the Israelites inherited God’s initial promise to Abraham. If you were a Jew and descended from Abraham, you could claim a share in this inheritance. But if you weren’t a Jew, you didn’t have any real claim. You didn’t have the blood line connected to this great inheritance. Part of the good news of the New Testament announces God including non-Jews in His inheritance. Notice in verse 12, that the inheritance is not Israel or the Promised Land. It is the inheritance of the saints in light.” So these are the set apart ones who live in the light of God. They live under God’s reign. That means they no longer live under the devil’s reign. Remember, we just said, we couldn’t do anything to get ourselves out of his dark reign. So what does God do?

He qualified us. He made us fit. He did something so that we could leave darkness and join these saints of light. What qualifies a person to be part of the saints of light? Well, you just have to live a perfectly holy life. Does anyone here claim that qualification? No. But Jesus lived a perfectly righteous life. God was willing to clothe or transfer Jesus’ righteousness onto us. That means we are now qualified to share in the inheritance. It’s not because of our good works. It’s because of Christ’s righteousness. Romans 5:18-19 talk about this. “Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience (that’s Adam in Genesis) made the many sinners, so by the one man’s obedience (Jesus) the many were made righteous.” God the Father provided what we needed to qualify for His inheritance of the saints in light.

What else did God do? **He delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.** That’s a direct quote from verse 13 back in Colossians 1. So we see the domain or authority of darkness. Apart from Christ, people live under the authority of this kingdom.

We cannot free ourselves from it. We need a deliverer. This language reminds us of the Exodus in the Old Testament. Remember the Israelites lived in slavery under the Egyptians. They could not deliver themselves. So God raised up Moses. Through him and his brother Aaron, God performed the 10 sign acts against Egypt and her gods. Then Egypt released the Israelites from slavery to begin the journey to the Promised Land.

Here God delivered us from the domain of darkness. So He rescued us. It's like He went into our cell block with the key to unlock our cell and bring us out. But He didn't just release us so we could go back to live in darkness. He transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. So we no longer live under the reign of darkness. We have been relocated to this new kingdom under Jesus.

This is full on rescue. We couldn't escape by ourselves. People who have come to Christ later in life might have a greater initial appreciation for this rescue. I might remember more of life under darkness. I think of someone like John Newton – the former slave ship captain and author of Amazing Grace who came to Christ at the age of 23. In one of his letters to his wife, he remembers the hardness of his mind towards God before conversion. "My own experience convinces me that nothing short of a Divine power can soften that mind which, after having stifled or put repeated checks of conscience, has renounced revelation, and is hardened like steel by infidelity. I know the gall and bitterness, the effects and the awful danger of that state."⁵ Newton resisted becoming a Christian for many years. He only turned to Christ out of desperation on a ship that was in danger of sinking. God brought him to near ruin and then Newton turned. He recognized this near ruin saved him from ultimate ruin apart from Christ. In another letter he writes "If I had not been ruined, I should have been ruined indeed."⁶

But what if we don't have the experience of dramatic life change? What if we have been Christians most of our lives? What if we can't remember life under the domain of darkness? Maybe it is like the children of immigrants. The parents decided to make a move in the hope that their children might have

⁵ The Works of John Newton, Volume 4, Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, PA, First published 1839, Banner of Truth Trust 2015, page 8.

⁶ Ibid., 44.

a better life and opportunity in the future. So the children experience this “better life” their whole life. They have little understanding of the life or situation they were saved from. Only by listening to their parents and others who experienced those hardships might they gain some appreciation. So we need to listen to the testimonies of others who remember life under the domain of darkness.

I also wonder if we get glimpses of the extent of this rescue because we live near the “domain of darkness” all the time. We see its impact on other’s lives. We see the sinfulness and darkness in our own hearts bubble out at times. The more we understand the depth of our own sin, the more we might grasp the great deliverance God provided.

So, what did God do to move us from darkness to light? He qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to kingdom of His beloved son. **3 - Through His Son, He give us redemption and the forgiveness of sins.** Redemption is slave market language. In ancient times, everyone knew about slave markets. Slaver sellers would line up their “product” for sale. Buyers would come along and purchase people for slavery. Imagine you hadn’t seen a family member for a few months. Then you hear they are being sold as a slave in the market. You rush down there. You want to buy them for their release. You want to pay for their release. That’s redemption.

Apart from Christ, we are slaves to our sin. We also live under a form of slavery to the devil. The only price to redeem us is the blood of a pure sacrifice on our behalf. The only completely pure person was Jesus. So that’s part of what the cross was all about. This sinless man sacrificed Himself on our behalf. When we trust Christ, God goes to the slave market and redeems us. This also means our debt for sin is paid. Jesus’ blood paid for that also. Notice these are all past events for the Christian. We have already been qualified. We have already been delivered, transferred, redeemed, and forgiven.

These are all some God’s great actions of love for us. Remembering His great acts on our behalf can snap us out of that complacency. The idea of this passage is God delivered us from darkness so we can live in the light.

How do we live in the light? How do you live as a child of light?

One - live with joy and gratitude because of our inheritance, deliverance and redemption.

Whether God saved us when we were young or older, God has done great works on your behalf. So we live with thanksgiving and joy over the great rescuing work of God. If we came to Christ at a young age, we need to thank God that he rescued us so early and saved us from living longer under the domain of darkness.

Two - Cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Romans 13:12 says “The night is far gone: the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” We can be rescued from the domain of darkness. But we can still choose to act as if we still live there. The devil will continue to lie and deceive us in an attempt to get us to rejoin his rebellious ways. Some darkness has taken up residence in our hearts or minds. So we need to cast these off as the light of Jesus shines on each part of our lives. The darkness in our lives is like an iceberg. About 10% of an iceberg is above the water line. 90% is below. Imagine the iceberg is the sin and/or darkness in our lives. When the sun shines upon an iceberg, the top part can melt. Then more comes up from under the water. When the light of Jesus shines on our darkness above the water, we deal with that by the power of the Spirit. Then we deal with the next thing. This is a lifelong journey of melting the iceberg of sin and darkness in our lives. That’s what Jesus came to do. That’s how God continues to love and pursue us each day. Our job is to cast off the works of darkness as Jesus’ light exposes them. We ask for the Spirit’s empowering to leave behind that sin that once enslaved us. Cast off the works of darkness & put on the armor of light.

You are now qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. You have been rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son. So darkness and the devil have no authority over you. You have come under God’s protection. You have brothers and sisters who can help you and stand with you. You have been released from slavery to sin. So you can live free from it’s ruthless mastery. You have been forgiven of your sins. So you can move forward knowing that the Lord will declare you not guilty forever.

This is really the Gospel. So will we live by it? Will you receive it by faith. Comer writes, “We think of faith as something for religious people, but all of us live by faith. To have faith is simply to live as if it’s true. It means to put your trust in something or someone and remain loyal to it.”⁷ May God empower us to live with loyalty to Him as we remember His great acts on our behalf.

⁷ John Mark Comer, *Live No Lies*, 44.