



Sermon – September 20, 2020
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Verses Covered This Week

Colossians 1:12 - 14

Exodus 6:6 - 8

Let's open our Bibles together to Colossians 1:12 this morning. Colossians 1:12. And if you're here for the first time, whether in the room or online, welcome home. We're glad you're with us. We're coming this morning to God's word because we want to grow in the gospel. We want to know the Father more. Especially during this season of our 21 days of prayer. If you remember, over the course of these three weeks, we are turning to the Lord as we journey through this prayer in Colossians asking for God to move in special ways by praying with specificity. And one of the ways that we're going to manifest that this morning is after the message, during our response time, I want you to know that these steps are open and we're inviting you together to come and join us if you feel comfortable with that. To take a knee here before the Lord and have some time of corporate prayer. So that we're not just praying individually over these 21 days; but we are praying as a community. Asking for God to move in our midst. And I want you to be able to ready your hearts now for that.

Now speaking of this 21 days of prayer, one of the things we focus on is praying our problems and praying our plans. Well, this past week my plans had me down in the Bay City area. I was on a trip with Compassion International who we partner with for international work. They had a group of pastors together for a time of connection and investment. But we also got to do some hunting. Well, on Wednesday, our hunting plans included getting the chance to go alligator hunting. And so I had a very specific prayer that day; included two things. Lord, would you keep me alive today? I'm glad to report that He answered that. And would You help us make some memories by having something exciting happen? Well, let's see if the Lord answered that second question. If you'll check out the screen, you'll see what we were able to catch that day. That, my friends, is a 13' 3" alligator. The state record is 14' 4". It wasn't too far off. It was caught in the same lake, Lake Texana. And we had just an incredible time wrestling that thing into the boat. It weighs over a thousand pounds. The guide told us it's probably over 100 years old. It was around back in World War 1, World War 2, made it through the Great Depression, it survived the Spanish flu, and it made it through COVID. But it was no match for our team on Wednesday. I guess the Lord answers prayers after all.

So the challenge here as we turn our attention to the text this morning is that we want to have the type of grateful hearts that pray. Paul is going to turn our focus, if you remember two weeks ago we talked about praying for the will of God. Let's week we talked about praying that we would walk with God. And this week he's going to challenge us to pray in light of the works of God. If you'll notice with me the way that the text begins, let's see what it says here beginning in verse 12.

¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Now Black Hawk pilot Kipp Goding had spent many years in combat zones like the Middle East. But his most dangerous trip didn't happen in some battleground overseas, but it happened just a few weeks ago on the west coast of California. See, now that he stepped out of the military, he runs a rescue missions for the California fire department. And what had happened is as wildfires had surged in western California, one was particularly bad near Fresno by the Mammoth Lake Reservoir. There were probably people that were on a Coronavirus vacation trying to get away into a secluded place. And their dream vacation quickly turned into a nightmare. Because those flames engulfed all around the camping area of that reservoir. There was no pathway of escape. In fact, the last warning that they had before communication went dark is that if you can't find a way out, your best hope of surviving the flames would be to plunge yourself into the lake in hopes that the water would save you from the fire. Well, knowing that situation, Kipp Goding and his team made a decision against what probably was wise in the eyes of many, to go on a rescue mission. They loaded up this Black Hawk and another Chinook and they took off into the smoke. Into the flames. They plunged themselves into that darkness and they landed right there on the shoreline. They were able to rescue dozens and dozens of people. In fact, they had to make three trips in and out of this danger zone in order to rescue all those that were there and transfer them to freedom and safety. They sacrificed what was in their own best interests for the sake of the deliverance of others. And when we hear stories like that in our day and age, they are giving us small glimpses of this rescue mission that Paul is speaking of here this morning in Colossians 1. That in a much greater way, God has done amazing things for us through His Son. Things that bring about reward by rescue that comes about through redemption. And as we turn our time to this text, Paul is going to be finishing his prayer for the Colossians. And he's calling us and them to pray with thanksgiving. Because Paul knows there's a difference between an entitled heart and a grateful heart. Entitled hearts pout, but grateful hearts pray.

And as we look at this text this morning and continue this season of our 21 days of prayer, there are three reasons that we should come to the Lord in prayer with grateful hearts. And you're going to notice the first one right here in verse 12 where we see that Paul tells we should pray with grateful hearts because of our reward from the Father. Because of our reward from the Father. So look back at what he says there. He says, giving thanks to the Father. A key part of prayer is remembering and appreciating who God is and what He's done for us in Christ. And he describes that right there at the beginning of verse 12 by telling us that the Father has qualified you. He speaks of this idea of qualification. This word only occurs here and one other spot in the New Testament. It's the idea of being made fit, adequate, suitable for the situation. God takes those of us who are unqualified because of our sin and He qualifies us by His Son. He

makes us have a proper standing. And what are we qualified for? Well look back at verse 12. He says, we're qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Paul speaks here of inheritance. This term is used nearly a dozen times in the New Testament. It speaks about our lot, our portion, what we are going to receive in relationship with God. And it's picking up on the idea of inheritance that would be common in that day and age. That inheritance was often narrowly limited to the first born of the family. But what the gospel shows us is that all of us who trust in Christ are grafted into this family inheritance. We receive the inheritance that he speaks of throughout Colossians. If you remember back in verse 5, he speaks about this inheritance as the hope that is laid up for you in heaven. Or he speaks later on in Colossians 3:23 about how we will receive the inheritance as a reward. Paul is reminding us that our hearts should be filled with gratitude and prayer because of the reward that we will receive from our heavenly Father. Now who is this inheritance for? Look back to the text there. It tells us that this inheritance is for the saints in light. The saints. Those holy ones. Those marked out by the gospel are those who will receive that inheritance. Back in the Old Testament the inheritance given to God's people was for all of them who had been set apart, entering into the promised land. You remember how each tribe was divided, portions of the land, to receive as their inheritance. Well now Paul speaks about our inheritance in Christ. It's not simply attractive land somewhere in the Middle East. But it's the entire universe in a new creation order that Christ is ushering in through the gospel. He talks there about this inheritance, this reward that we've received from our Father that we are not qualified to receive on our own. But that Christ qualifies us for by the power of the gospel.

Well as we were going through that hunting trip that I showed you the picture of earlier this week, the only reason we got to go after a gator like that is because of the guide that we were with. This guide's Larry Janeck and he's known in that region as the alligator king. He's been doing this for 25 years and he has access to certain places, including Lake Texana, where we did our hunting that nobody else can get on. And I remember going into the part where we were about to hunt for these monsters and it had signs there that said, "No Trespassing" or "No Firearms", "No Hunting". And I'm watching this and realizing, on my own I could never get to do this. I am not qualified to do this. In fact, when we loaded up on the boat, we're in this small, metal boat. We're going out there and I'm wondering to myself, "What are we thinking? Are we really sure this is a good idea?" How was it that we were able to go out and to hunt in a place that we were never would have on our own? It wasn't because of who we were or because of our own qualifications, but who we were with. And his standing in relationship with the local authorities that gave him the contract in order to hunt on it. It wasn't on the basis of something that we did to qualify. But it was on the standing on someone else outside us who because of our connection with him, allowed us to do something and to reap the reward that we would have never been able to experience on our own. Well how much more so is that true for us in Christ? That in the gospel, God takes those of us whose righteousness is but filthy rags and makes us pure white before God. His blood washes us clean of all of our filth, all our sin and shame. And He makes us ready, He makes us qualified to receive this inheritance. And as we think about this season of prayer, these 21 days that should reframe how it is that we go to the Lord with a grateful heart. That if we recognize that there is a future reward coming for us from our Father, it should change the way we pray in the present. That we would ask God to pour out His riches upon our life, upon our plans, upon our problems. Trusting Him to provide endurance. Trusting for Him to sustain us. That future promise enables us to pray for present perseverance through the problems that we face.

But I want you to notice that this text doesn't just stop here. It gives us a second reason why we should have grateful hearts when Paul tells us we should pray with grateful hearts because of our rescue from the darkness. You see all he talks about in verse 13? He says, he has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. In other words, our hearts should not just be grateful because of our reward from our heavenly Father. But also because of the rescue that we've experienced from darkness. He speaks there of the domain of darkness. What is that? Well we know when we look all the way back in Genesis 3, that when Adam and Eve fall into sin, a curse comes upon the land. There is judgment that comes and there is darkness that enters in. And this domain of darkness that he speaks of here is the reign of Satan over this world since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. This darkness reflects the curse that sin has brought into the world. And from the very beginning, after that sin begins, we see this clash of the kingdoms taking place where the kingdom of darkness is at war against the kingdom of light. We see this darkness all around us today, don't we? Maybe we catch these glimpses of darkness in our culture, in politics, when there's abuse, in broken families, in addiction, in wandering hearts. We don't need to wonder if there's darkness. We feel it all around us. And what Paul is reminding us of here, is that in Christ God has sent a deliverer from the domain of darkness. That in the gospel, here's what God is doing. He is delivering us from sin. And I want you to see the nature of how this deliverance plays out by holding your spot here in Colossians and sliding all the way back to the book of Exodus. Exodus chapter 6. The second book of the Bible. Turn to chapter 6 in verses 6 through 8. Because what's going Old Testament happen here is that when Paul is unpacking the nature of God's deliverance for us in Christ through the gospel in Colossians 1, he is picking up on the pattern of deliverance that God has established through the Exodus back in the Old Testament. Remember the exodus is the central event of salvation in the Old Testament. And let's see what this rescue from darkness looked like for Israel. So before this exodus even occurred, God speaks of what's going to happen in Exodus 6, verses 6 through 8. He says this:

⁶Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. ⁷I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'"

Do you see this pattern that emerges here where God gives them a promise of redemption and rescue and reward? These same themes that we find in Colossians 1 are right there that God, through His mighty outstretched arm will save and deliver His people from themselves. You remember how that played out in the exodus, right? That before Israel goes out of Egypt, the last plague is the taking of the first born. And they plaster the blood all across the door posts and the angel of the Lord passes over those who are covered in blood. They are delivered from judgment through the shedding of blood. And then they pass over dry ground. And then the sea crashes against the Egyptians. They face the waters of judgment. And as you look ahead to what Paul is speaking of here in Colossians 1, that's what Jesus does for you and me. That's the nature of His deliverance. The rescue comes because He is the Passover Lamb. The shedding of His blood causes God to pass over in judgment of our sins. Even though we walk through the sea on dry

ground in salvation, He plunges the waters of judgment upon Jesus Himself who takes on the sins of the world. He dies a death that you and I deserved to die. He takes on the wages of our sins so that we might be delivered. That's what Paul's speaking of here. This idea of deliverance and transfer. Notice the way he speaks of it there. That we are transferred into the kingdom of His beloved Son. God doesn't just pull us out of the domain of darkness, He also transfers us into the kingdom of light. In the same way that Israel was not just brought out of Egypt, but they were ultimately brought into the promised land. God gives us a new home. He gives us a new family. He gives us a new kingdom built around the reality of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. He speaks there of that beloved Son. The one that 2 Samuel 7 foretold that one day a son of David would come whose kingdom would last forever. Or you remember the way that when Jesus was going through baptism, God appeared in that moment and said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." If you know Jesus this morning, you have been transferred into that kingdom. He has gone behind enemy lines and He has rescued you and delivered you from the domain of darkness. As sergeant Thomas Payne never imagined that the standing room only flight that he took on a Chinook out of a battleground in Iraq would lead to him one day standing in front of the president of the United States to receive the medal of honor, the first time it's been given to a Delta Force member since those who were honored for their heroism that was documented in the movie Blackhawk Down. Well that's exactly what occurred. Because in 2015, Sergeant Payne and others were in a rescue mission. Reconnaissance satellites demonstrated that an Isis stronghold in northern Iraq, they had been digging mass graves and they knew that death for many was imminent. And so these special forces units invaded into that moment, they went into the battle in an intense fire fight and were able to rescue nearly 70 people who were prisoners of Isis. In fact, video footage showed in that moment that once they got most of them out, Sergeant Payne went back into the building one last time in order to rescue one more. They loaded up those helicopters, standing room only, more than it would probably normally be able to bear, and they not just delivered them from their enemies, but they transferred them to freedom. They brought them to safety. You had a warrior go behind enemy lines in order to deliver some so that they may be transferred out to receive the freedom that they would have never had on their own. Well, isn't that the glorious truth that Paul is speaking of here? That in Colossians 1 when he speaks of being delivered, being transferred, he is talking about the nature of our salvation in Christ. That we have been set free by the gospel. That we who are enslaved to sin have been rescued. That we have been transferred. That we are raised to walk in newness of life. And if that's true for you and me, then what that means is that we are called to be lights in the midst of this darkness. If we see this darkness all around us, that's what God is asking us to do. But when we speak about that idea of lights, don't think of it as the flashlight that your 7-year-old turns on in the middle of the night and shoves it right in your eye because he's got a question and he needs to see you in order to ask it. You're not that kind of blinding light that jars somebody and frustrates them when they are content in the midst of the darkness. Instead, think of yourself like a lighthouse. That steady, stable, secure place that in the midst of darkness, in the midst of danger, anyone can look to and can see your gospel consistency. Can watch your integrity. Can notice your intentionality. And when they see that light constantly around them in the darkness, maybe that's what the Lord will use to open their eyes to see their need of Him. That's why in these 21 days of prayer our hearts should be burdened to be filled with gratefulness for what God has done for us in the cross. That we would not lose sight of our deliverance because it is the key to our gratitude. And it shapes that we're called to pray.

But I want you to notice how this text ends. Because in verse 14 we see a third dimension that Paul is calling us to to be grateful for this morning when he tells us that we should pray with grateful hearts because of our redemption from sin. Our redemption from sin. Do you see how he says it there? In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin. So Paul speaks here last that we should have thankful hearts because of the redemption from sin that leads to our rescue from darkness. And notice the way that this verse begins. It starts by using the phrase, in whom. You might expect it to say something like, through whom. That in other words, it's through Jesus that we find this redemption. But he instead uses the phrase, in whom. Why is that? Well it's because Paul is reminding us of the important gospel truth of our union with Christ. That when we come to know God, He doesn't just deliver us and transfer us. He unites us to His Son so that now what's true of Jesus is true of you and me, including this reality of redemption. He speaks there of redemption. And we know in our cultural moment, everyone is looking for redemption. And they try to find it in many different ways. Maybe they seek it through success or maybe through fame or significance. Or perhaps even through politics. And that might be feeling especially acute here as we live in this polarized moment as the election season approaches. And that has now been intensified by the loss of Ruth Bader Ginsberg. And there is so much polarization and frustration in the political arena because often people look to this as their source of redemption. As their source of hope. But what Paul is reminding us of this morning, that we need to recall during this season, is that no matter what happens in the election, no matter who fills this Supreme Court justice seat, what matters the most and what secures our redemption is not who's sitting in the situation room, it's not who's sitting in the supreme court room, but who is sitting on the throne room of heaven. That's the redemption we have. That's the hope that we are provided. And what is that redemption? Well if you look at it back in the ancient time period in which the Bible was written, this term redemption spoke of a price that was paid in order to ransom a slave. So you would have slave trades during that time period and one would be up on the auction block and there would be bidding to see what price would be paid for them. And the redemption price was the purchase price paid to one who was a slave so that they might become under new ownership. Isn't that an amazing picture of what God does for us in Christ? That in the gospel, those of us who are slaves to sin, those of us who are running from God, we have been rescued and redeemed through the purchase price of Christ's blood. He has paid that ransom for you and for me so that we can know Him in a saving way. Paul talks there about redemption, but he also connects it with forgiveness. You see it there? He says, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. It's like there are two sides of the same coin. That's what Paul is driving at here. In fact, in Colossians, he talks about the idea of forgiveness more than in any other of his books. And this word forgiveness means to be set free. It means to experience remission, to experience release, the cancellation of a debt. Things that we could not pay on our own, we are now set free from. That's what happens in the gospel. That the wages of sin that you and I deserve to pay and that we're required to produce, the debt that we owe, that we cannot provide; God has made a way through us, through the purchase price of His Son to experience forgiveness of sin so that as the Bible says, that as far as the east is from the west, so too has God separated us from that sin.

I came across a viral video this week from a supermarket. It was a recording that happened and there was a woman who was checking out at the counter and a man standing not far behind her and as soon as the scene was set, I was assuming there's going to be some sort of practical joke here that happens. Something funny that's got everybody sharing it around. Or maybe it's going to be something divisive and controversial and maybe it's an argument about masks or

something else. But as I began to watch the video, the reason it was going viral wasn't because of comedy or controversy; but because of kindness. So here's the situation. This mom was checking out. Her bill was about \$25 and she swipes her credit card in order to pay and it's declined. She swipes it again thinking something just didn't work right. Well it turns out that the card was not working, it was rejected. She was unable to pay what she owed. And so she then hustles through her purse and she's seeking to find how much cash she has and she pulls it all out and she's short. She only has \$14 to pay her \$25 cost. And so you can hear her say on the video, "Just take the diapers off the bill." She couldn't even afford the diapers for her kid. And as this is happening, the man that is standing behind her is listening in. And the moment she says that about the diapers, he begins to take a step forward. And you can't really make out what he's saying until you realize that he is offering to make a payment for her. And when she sees him offering, at first she resists him. She rejects him and says, "No, you don't need to do that." And then upon his insistence, she then tries to renegotiate with him and says, "Well how about you pick up the rest. I'll take care of what I can afford and you pay the rest." Until he looks her in the eye and he says, "I got you." And she finally steps back and allows him to pay the debt she couldn't afford on her own. What we find here in Colossians 1 this morning is that in Christ, God has done that for you and me. He has paid our redemption. He has taken the debt that we could not pay and offered it. And the call of the gospel for each one of us this morning is that as we persist through this 21 days of prayer, that we should come to the Lord in prayer grateful in our hearts for the reward that we have from our Father, the rescue that we have from darkness, and the redemption that we have from our sins.

Let's pause and pray this morning.

Father, we're so grateful that You have raised us to walk in newness of life. That You have paid the debt that we owed. You have made a way for us in Christ. And I pray if there are people in this room this morning that haven't experienced that redemption, Lord. Would you open their hearts right now? Would you give them light in the darkness? And I pray that as we turn our attention to You, and respond to You corporately as we come forward this morning to pray at these steps and gather corporately to lift our hearts up to you, I pray that they would be hearts that are overflowing with gratitude. With gratefulness for what You've done for us in the gospel so that we might not just respond to You in this moment in the way that You lead us, but that we might live in a way that reflects the reality of what You've done for us in Christ every day of our life. And we ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.