

Week 4

Paul's Prayer Colossians 1:11-12

In other words, the request for the continuing life in the revealed knowledge of God has as its end as life of not only determined commitment but also a persistent joyful gratitude to God our Father Who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. It's obvious that if I need to be qualified to share this inheritance that I am not naturally fit to inherit, I must have some work done in me. I was first fitted for this inheritance when I recognized my sinful nature-that is my claim to my right to myself- and bowed my knee in repentance before God.

Salvation is the work of an instant, sanctification is a the work of a lifetime-by the way the work being done in me is by the Holy Spirit, the

This prayer is for strengthening against temptation, to be furnished by God's grace, to do whatever He asked me to do.

Strengthened to serve patiently in suffering work; supported in suffering work. Have you ever considered that suffering is a kind of work, which can bring glory to God? If we are persistently committed, then we can bear suffering patiently as James tells us in chapter 1:4. Matthew Henry in his commentary dares to suggest we not only are strengthened to bear suffering patiently but we receive it as a gift and thank God for it. Trials, troubles, suffering are aggravating and when we bear these patiently we grow in grace. According to the KJV the word longsuffering is attached to this; bringing us the idea that trials and suffering, even when they are long in duration must be lived with patience, not grumbling and complaining. How can we joyfully suffer in tribulation and rejoice when we are counted worthy to suffer for His Name? Only in the power of the Holy Spirit, strengthened by the grace of God. Practically speaking our prayer in suffering is usually for deliverance but here we have a whole new idea, that suffering is a kind of gift. Suffering can be redemptive, just thing of the redemption we gained by Jesus suffering.

Now we come to the reason for suffering with joy and that is;

Colossians 1:13-14

This is a summary of the gospel, the great work of redemption by Jesus and we are told to be ever mindful and thankful for this wonderful gift.

Now we consider the work of God the Father in our salvation. How can we be joyful in suffering?

Because God the Father rescued us from darkness and sin's domination, saved us from slavery to Satan, the Prince of Darkness. What happened after this mighty work of rescue? God the Father transferred us to the Kingdom of Light, the Kingdom of Jesus, and His Son. John told us that in Him (Jesus) is life that the life in Him is light or eternal life? Another way of saying this is that salvation is the translating of the soul from slavery to Satan to the kingdom of Jesus; this is why Jesus said He came to make us free. All who are headed for heaven later are prepared for heaven now. No matter how long suffering lasts is temporary; eternal life is eternal.

Colossians 1:15

And now we get a wonderful description by Paul of the glorious Son of God, Jesus, our Rescuer and Savior. He is the image of God the Father, not as man was made in the image of God, but He is the express image of God's person, a natural likeness so that as Jesus said, anyone who has seen Him has seen the Father and His glory was the glory of the only begotten of the Father.

He is the first-born of all creation, not that He was created but just as the first born in a family at that time was the heir and lord of all, so he is the heir of all things, according to Hebrews 1:2. This also signifies that Jesus is the begetter or producer or cause of all things. He came from heaven not from the dust of which we are made. Jesus reflects God and being God, He reveals God to us.

Colossians 1:16

Jesus is so far from being a created creature, which is sometimes the mistaken translation of this phrase, that He is Himself the creator. He made everything out of nothing from the highest angel to man to the lowliest creature. Repeated for emphasis, everything was made by Jesus. Back to John 1:3 all things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Colossians 1:17

He was before the world began, remember John 1:1; in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. Jesus is the Word.

Remember the definition of this use of "word" is all wisdom that can be known. He was before He was born of a virgin, He was before all time. Things consist by His power; things stay in order by His power. Friends the planets and the stars do not fly all over the

sky they hold in their place, because Jesus holds them there. The entire creation is kept together by the power of Jesus.

Colossians 1:18

Jesus is not only king over all governments but also of the church. No man is head of any church Jesus is the Head. Jesus is the author of our salvation. He overcame death by His own power. He was not the first one to be raised from the dead, but He was the first and only one to raise Him from the dead. Because of His resurrection, we can see for ourselves what our resurrection will be like. He is preeminent over all; I hope you have given Him preeminence over your life. John 5:23 says if you do not honor the Son, you do not honor the Father. In other words you cannot honor God if you do not honor Jesus.

Colossians 1:19-20

What fullness dwells in Him? Friends the fullness of righteousness, goodness, strength and grace. In the person of Christ all of the fullness of God is found bodily. Whatever God is, Christ is. Whatever Christ is, God is. This pleases the Father for Jesus sake and we can come to Him who has the fullness to help us in time of need. He intercedes for us. Remember John told us in 1:16 “of His fullness we receive and grace upon grace-that is unmerited favor. Have you experienced the fullness only Jesus can give? The moment you surrender your life to Him and ask Him to be your Savior, all that emptiness and hollowness inside will be filled. Are you trying to fill that emptiness with food, or money, entertainment or things, have you noticed; it doesn’t matter how much you have, it is never enough. Only Jesus is adequate to fill the soul.

Let’s digress for a moment to the first chapter of Revelation, verses 13 to 16 where we can see a full size portrait of our living LORD. Listen to John’s description:
His eyes were as a flame of fire.

Out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; this sword is the Word of God. And His face as the sun shining in His strength. Then John said: And when I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me and said Fear not. I am He who is alive, I was dead, behold I am alive forevermore. And I have the keys of hell and of death. Revelation 1:17 and 18. Do you know the one who has the keys to death and hell but has come to give you life? Bow your knee to Him, accept the life He is eager to give you.

This is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in whom all the fullness of God dwells bodily because it pleased God that in Jesus all fullness should dwell. This is our great God and Savior Jesus Christ the first of all, the image of the invisible God, the very essence of God Himself.

How was our salvation procured? By the blood of this same Jesus, who is God? People say they don't want to hear about the blood and the cross that is only solution to the huge problem you have, that problem of your sin and guilt. It was the blood of Jesus which made atonement for our sin, the blood is the life and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, Hebrews 9:22. There was such an immense value in the blood of Christ, that because of His death God was willing to deal with men in new terms to bring them under a covenant of grace and to pardon and accept all who will come on His terms. So that we are no longer under a covenant of law, but the new covenant in Jesus' blood.

The prophet Micah said: With what shall I come to the LORD? And bow myself before the God on High? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? Chapter 6:6. The answer to that question is the atoning grace of our Lord Jesus. Through the blood of His cross He reconciled us to God. In the body of His flesh through death He presents us holy and forgiven and acceptable in the sight of the LORD. All fullness dwells in Him. No limit.

Jesus is the fullness for all our needs here on earth; a supply abounding full and deep forever.

What can we bring to such a One to atone for our sin? Nothing, we have to come empty.

Colossians 1:21-22

What does it mean to say that Jesus reconciled everything to Himself? Reconciliation means reestablishing a relationship, or causing a relationship to be peaceable when it had been adversarial. Because Jesus is Creator and Sustainer of everything, His death on the cross provided reconciliation for everything.

Reconciliation between God and man means that Jesus provided a way to bring sinful man to a holy God. Because people are born into sin, they cannot become good enough to be acceptable to God. As we said in our study of John; Jesus substituted His perfect life for our sinful life, taking the penalty for sin that we deserve. The penalty for sin is death. We are guilty but Jesus took the punishment. Thus He redeemed or bought us from the power of sin and reconciled us to God. Paul said at one time we were far away, not just apathy, but hostile to God, strangers to His way of thinking. Wrong thinking leads to sin.

What else did Jesus reconcile? When Adam fell, all creation fell with him from the perfect state in which God had created it. Think of all those weeds you fight in your garden. The things of the world are subject to decay, including us. Think of all the suffering and sickness we experience because of Adam's sin. One day, all creation will

be transformed, because of Jesus; one day God will remake all things new. The shadow of all the beauty God created is all around us in nature, but He will remake it into something we cannot yet imagine. We have hope and a future.

What is the goal of reconciliation? Bringing people into the Presence of God, holy, blameless without a single fault. Jesus act of reconciliation gave all believers perfect standing with God. If you are honest you will admit that there is no way you can do this yourself, no matter how hard you try, no matter the good works you do.

Now keeping in mind that the Colossians were endangered in their beliefs by teachers of Gnosticism and their effect on the culture we have seen how Paul described Jesus with the intent to clear up all their misconceptions. What were those misconceptions? We discussed several in our overview and let's look at them again.

The Gnostics taught that matter was evil so it follows that people are evil and they said no God would have come to earth as a human with a body. So Paul taught them that Jesus is the image, the exact likeness of God and is himself God, and yet He died on a cross as a human being.

Secondly the Gnostics taught that God could not have created the world since matter is evil. So Paul stated that Jesus, being God, created the world.

Thirdly the Gnostics said Jesus was not the unique Son of God but rather one of many intermediaries between God and people. Paul said that Jesus existed before anything else.

Fourthly, the Gnostics refused to see Jesus as the source of salvation. They insisted that people could find God only through special and secret knowledge. Paul insisted that the only way to salvation was through Jesus.

As I consider these things it occurs to me and probably to you that all these false teachings or arguments against the uniqueness and sufficiency of Jesus are still with us, alive and well in our culture. It seems so hard to admit you cannot work out your salvation yourself and that you need Jesus. It is the end of all pride and self.

Colossians 1:23

Now here is the crux of the matter, would they continue, that is endured in their faith even in the midst of all the heresy surrounding them? Will you endure in your faith in the face of scorn, misunderstanding, and suffering?

Paul closes this introductory section by telling them that the gospel, the good news, has been preached all over the world, spiritual truth was not available to just a very few special people, as the Gnostics taught. The hope of the gospel is available to everyone and Paul was appointed by God to tell it.

It's wonderful the way Paul took all the false teachings of the Gnostics and showed how the truth of the gospel and the person of Jesus refuted all of it. It's a real challenge for us to be armed with the truth at all times so that we can be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us.