September 17/18, 2022

Qualified in Christ

Rooted in Christ Series

Colossians 1:9-14

Pastor Bryan Clark

So, let's imagine that you're interviewing for your dream job. The salary, the benefits, the location, but more than anything else, it's in perfect alignment with your passions. You can't believe someone would pay you to do this job, but at the end of the conversation with the HR director, she looks at you and says, "I've been reading through your resume and I'm sorry to tell you, you just don't qualify."

The New Testament is filled with all this magnificent truth that Paul and Colossians refer to as the *inheritance of the saints.* It's almost unbelievable, it's so good. But here's my concern. I've been reading through your resume, and I just want to ask you, "Are you certain you qualify for the inheritance of the saints?" Well, that's what we want to talk about. If you have a Bible, turn with me to Colossians, Chapter one. Last week, Ryan did a great job of opening up the book of Colossians to us. He talked about the church in Christ at Colossae. We pick it up in chapter one, verse 9:

> **For this reason also,** (*NASB, Colossians 1:9a)

Well, for what reason? Based on everything that Ryan talked about last week. The gospel had come to Colossae, and there was a group of people who, by faith, had believed. Their lives had been radically changed by the power of Jesus. They are loving one another; they are bearing fruit—all this stuff that Ryan talked about:

> **For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask…**

So Paul is saying, based on all of that—and he's so excited about what's happening—that he prays constantly for them. What does he pray for? So, as we begin to go into this, one of the things that's a characteristic of Paul, and you see this in quite a few of his letters including Colossians, is that he uses what we would refer to as long run-on sentences. The information just piles on top of information, and pretty soon it's just all mashed together, and it's confusing. It's like, "I can't even figure out what he's saying." So, in order to try to avoid that, we're going to think of it like layers. He lays a foundation, and then he builds upon it; then he talks about it. I'm also going to try to use very ordinary language just to make it as understandable as possible. So, what does he ask for?

> **…to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,** (Vs. 9b)

So, this is the foundational level. The prayer is that we would **be filled**. It's very interesting how many times Paul uses this word **filled** in the book of Colossians. Most scholars think whatever the heresy was, whatever the false teaching was that Paul was trying to address, one of the things the

false teachers were offering is that, "Jesus is good, but you need more in order to be **filled**." So, he's very strategically using this term to say, "No, Christ *is* enough to fill you with His fullness. You don't need anything more." This term, and grammatically the way it's used, would mean *filled completely full.* It would have been used of a ship that is completely filled, packed with cargo and ready for the voyage.

We don't have a lot of ships that we pack here in Nebraska, but it does remind me this past spring, Patty and I moved her mom from Lincoln to Montana. So, when you do that, you're guessing, "How big of a trailer do we need?" So, we made our guess, and we filled it up. The problem is once it was full, not everything was in there. Not a problem, all we have to do is unpack it and repack it. There's got to be a way. So, we pulled out, and repacked three times, till we got everything we needed in the trailer. Trust me, when we closed the door and pulled down the latch, it was filled. So, we're going to go with that imagery. We're talking about filling, packing our trailer. What is it filled with?

It's filled with **the knowledge of His will**. The Greek has a very ordinary word for **knowledge**. It's the one that's almost always used; that isn't this word. This is a word that is much more unique. It's limited to only spiritual or religious knowledge. We would say *the truth of the Bible*. It also is a word that means a special kind of knowledge. Some of the translators translated *true* knowledge. H.A. Ironside, the great old preacher, translated it *super knowledge*. I like that; we're going to go with that. So, we're packing our trailer full of super knowledge. It's the truth that God has revealed to us, the knowledge of His will. Now when he's talking about **His will**, he's not talking about the everyday stuff of God's will. He's talking about the big picture—the plan and purpose of God. So, we're packing our trailer full of this super knowledge concerning the plan and purpose of God.

He says, …**in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.** So, this is a couplet we saw a lot in the book of Proverbs. They're often seen together: **wisdom and understanding**. **Wisdom** is the idea of *seeing with discernment*. It's the ability to understand the difference between what matters and doesn't matter, what's important and what's not important. **Understanding**, then, carries the idea of them *implementing that into life.* So, the two together in Proverbs, we referred to as *skillful living*. So, we're going to go with that same language because that's what these two mean together. So, here's the foundational layer. The prayer is that you would pack your trailer full of super knowledge related to the plan and purpose of God, in order that you would understand the difference between what matters and what doesn't matter, to enable you to live skillfully in a very confusing world. But why? Why does that matter? Verse 10: Now we're going to build on that foundational level.

> **So that…** (This is why:) **so that you will walk** (or live) **in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him*…**

In other words, right living never flows out of an empty trailer. Right living flows out of right thinking. This word ***pleasing*** would be one of those words where it'd be easy just to read over and move on. But it's actually a very interesting word. This is the only time in the New Testament this word is used. It was commonly used in classic Greek and it's always a negative term…always. It carries the idea of someone who is subservient, almost groveling before a patron, in order to get something from that patron that they wanted. So, it was a negative kind of groveling term. Paul is

using it to say, ultimately, as slaves of Christ, we choose to be subservient. We choose to surrender to the truth in order to live a life pleasing to God.

Now, this is very interesting to think about. I would suggest to you that one of the things that I think has changed in the evangelical church across America in the last twenty years or so, is there are many people who would identify themselves as Christians. They identify themselves as Jesus lovers, and I think they're probably very sincere. But not only is their trailer empty, they don't have a knowledge of the truth. They really don't care. They really don't know what the Bible says. They don't really know what God has said. They're not really interested in that. What's happened is, in our post-modern culture, what a lot of philosophers have referred to as the modern self—sometimes referred to as the autonomous self—is it's all about me. It's all about me as an individual, me isolated from a community. It's me and Jesus riding into the sunset and, essentially, we reconstruct Jesus into our image and, instead of living to please Him, we've convinced ourselves that we follow Jesus our way, and Jesus is there to please us. Here's the big problem with that. That will never lead to the life your soul is longing for. It's just a very empty, frustrating way to live. What Paul is praying for is that we would understand the importance of a knowledge of the truth. We pack our trailer full of the truth that matters, in order to discern between what matters and doesn't matter, in order to live a life pleasing to Him. And to do that, we have to be willing to submit, to humbly be subservient to the truth, in order to live a life pleasing to God.

If we do that, then the outflow—the result of the first layer—so that layer two, the outflow or the result of the first layer, he identifies as four specific things. He says …**to please Him in all respects**. How? Number 1:

> **…bearing fruit in every good work**.

This is not something we go out and try to do. This is the natural outflow of understanding and living the truth. Now probably the easiest way to understand this is just to identify the fruit of the Spirit that Paul talks about in Galatians. The fruit of the Spirit; if the Spirit is in control of my life, then my life is characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. So, if I was to ask the people you do life with, does that describe you? What would they say?

So, let's think of it this way. I'm going to put this in the context of a marriage, but if you're not married, you put in a context that makes sense to you. This might be a reference to a friend group; this might be a reference to your boss; this might be a reference to your neighbor; you put it in a context that makes sense to you. But let me ask you the question, "If you're married, would you prefer that your spouse is characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, or would you prefer that they be angry, frustrated, cynical, fearful, selfish, controlling?" The answer is pretty obvious, isn't it? So, here's what I'm suggesting. For the sake of the people around you, pack your trailer full of super knowledge, in order to understand the plan and purpose of God, to live skillfully, to live a life pleasing to Him. Because the result of that, the outflow, is the fruit of the Spirit: That's number one. Number 2:

> **…increasing in the knowledge of God.** Same word—***increasing in the "super" knowledge of God.***

So, this is very interesting. It creates kind of a cycle. I've packed my trailer full of this super knowledge. When I live it out, then I can pack more knowledge into my trailer. That's what it's saying. The more I live it out, than the more I learn. The more I live it out, the more I learn, and I keep growing…increasing…growing in this super knowledge concerning the plan and purpose of God.

So, I've been at this just short of 40 years. So what I've seen a lot of, is people come to Christ, and they're excited; they're motivated; they learn; they grow; they serve. It's a very exciting season of life. But for some people, there comes a point when the trailer is full, and they stop living out that truth. They just kind of stop growing. They stop serving; they stop growing. Christianity—their Christian life—becomes kind of boring. They're not all that interested. Often they start looking somewhere else for something that will satisfy. I'm going to suggest to you that there are quite a few of those people, over the last few years, who have just moved on because they're bored with their Christian life, and they're looking for something more.

It's kind of like learning in a classroom. You can only learn so much in the classroom until you have to go out, put it into practice, and open up room in the trailer to learn some more. There's only so much you can learn in a classroom before you go out and apply it and make room for more learning. So that's what he's saying. It's not enough just to pack the trailer full. Then we need to live it out. We submit ourselves to this truth, and the more we live it out, the more we increase, the more we grow in this super knowledge. Once the trailer is full, you've got to take it somewhere. You've got to empty it to make room to put more in there. And that's what keeps us growing and maturing and becoming more and more conformed to the image of Christ. Third thing, Verse 11:

…strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might.

With all the craziness going on in our culture today, is there anyone who would say, "I'd like to be stronger?" I think we would all say that. …**strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might,** that could be translated *out of His might, out of His glory*. A lot of commentators take it that way. The basic idea is this. The glory of God is the sum total of all that God is. You remember Moses asked to see God's glory and God said, "Moses, if you saw My glory, it would kill you." God's glory is so great, and out of that flows His might. Out of that flows this power that strengthens us specifically in this text for two things:

…for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience;

Steadfastness means *endurance*. It was used to describe an athlete that would endure all the way to the gold, all the way to the finish line. In Hebrews 12:1 it says, *If you're going to run, run with endurance.* That's this word. Then, **patience**, the opposite of this word for patience is retaliation. It's revenge. We live in a revengeful culture. Everybody is about payback, about getting even, and as long as that's true of our culture, we'll never have flourishing. But when we understand what's true and what matters, and when we submit to this truth, we are **strengthened** in order to endure and in order to be patient. One commentator said endurance is for situations; patience is for people. That's probably a pretty good way to think about it. The fourth outflow: Verse 12:

…joyously giving thanks to the Father,

Now, again, I want to emphasize the point of this part of the text is not to go out and be more thankful. The point is this is a natural outflow of knowing and understanding and living the truth. It's interesting in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, how much the Bible talks about the importance of thanksgiving, and the warning about grumbling. It's not in a few passages; it's all over the Bible. This is something apparently God takes very seriously. Again, if I was to talk to the people around you, that you do life with, would they say you would be more identified as a person characterized by joyful thanksgiving or as a grumbler? How could anyone possibly understand these magnificent truths that pack our trailer, concerning the plan and purpose of God, and not be thankful? So, here's the deal you have to reckon with. If you're not characterized by joyful thanksgiving, you just don't get it. I'm sorry, you just don't! There's just no way you could really understand this magnificent truth, and not have it flow out of you in thanksgiving, which is the point Paul makes:

> **…giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light;**

Thankful because it's the Father who has qualified us to this magnificent inheritance in the saints. So, let's picture this scene. The Father is there distributing this magnificent inheritance. He says who gets it and who doesn't. And you come before the Father, under the condemnation of darkness, and you so desperately want this magnificent inheritance in the light. So, with trembling hands, you present your resume to the Father, and there are some good things there. There are some good works; there's some religious stuff. There are some good things there, but the Father keeps going through the resume and he starts to go. "Ummm, oooh," because there's also some junk there. There's sin and there's rebellion and there are all these ways that you have failed and let people down, and all the ugly stuff that is in all of our resumes. And with a very sad look on His face, He says, "I'm sorry, you just don't qualify." At that moment, in your utter desperation, you have nowhere else to turn. But you turn to Jesus, who is standing there with His Father, and in that moment, there is no one else to turn to. So, you turn to Jesus. Jesus smiles, and He slaps His resume on top of yours, and on the top of that resume is a red cross stained in blood. And now it's the resume of Jesus that the Father is looking through. It's perfect! It's perfect in every way! It's exactly what the Father wanted to see. And now, based on that resume, the Father invites you to enter into the inheritance of the saints. You didn't qualify. I don't qualify. None of us do. The only chance we have is if the Father qualifies us on the basis of His beloved Son. Just to make sure we understand what His Son did, look at two more verses. What did he do? Verse 13:

> **For He** (the Father… rescued us, saved us) **delivered us from the domain of darkness.** (That means condemnation) **and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,**

That word **transferred** is a word that means to basically re-establish someone from one country to another country. At one time you lived in the kingdom of darkness. You were a citizen there, under the condemnation of darkness. But because of the beloved Son of the Father, you have been re-established in the kingdom of light, and heir to the family fortune…

> **…in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin.**

Redemption is a slave market term. First readers would have been very familiar with this terminology. It means to pay the ransom; it means to purchase a slave, set them free. Jesus is not Rambo where he storms into the POW camp and breaks the prisoners out, and they spend the rest of their lives looking over their shoulder wondering if they'll get caught again.

The purchase price was paid. The ransom has been delivered. You are set free, never to be held under condemnation to those sins again. You have been forgiven. How could you know that? How could you understand that when you were so desperate in need, under condemnation, and that this is what God did for you? That you could inherit this magnificent treasure now and forever? How could you know all that and grumble? Maybe part of the problem is you've lost sight of what matters. You've lost sight of what's true. One of the problems in this culture is people are sidetracked by all this junk that at the end of the day, doesn't really matter much. And the evidence of that is we're angry and we're grumbly, and we don't represent Jesus well.

Paul's prayer for you is that you would pack your trailer full of super knowledge concerning the plan and purpose of God, understanding that plan and purpose of God includes you and a magnificent inheritance, in order that you would understand the difference between what matters and doesn't matter, in order that you would live skillfully, submitted to, subservient to this magnificent truth, because that is where I ultimately find the life my soul is longing for.

So, I don't know what's going on in your life this morning. I don't know what you're facing. I don't know what you're struggling with. I don't know what's on your resume. But this one thing I do know. Whatever it is, the answer does not lie out there somewhere. You're never going to find it out there. The answer is found in Jesus, and Jesus alone. Christ is enough! He is sufficient for whatever it is you're dealing with…which is why our prayer is that we would be deeply rooted in Christ.

> *Our Father, we celebrate what Jesus has done for us. God, in that horrible moment of realization that there's nothing I can do to qualify myself, it was Jesus who gave up His life, that the Father would qualify me in Christ. Lord, may we remember anew and afresh this morning, that there's no one else that can rescue us but Jesus, in whose name we pray, Amen.*

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FALL 2022 // WEEK 2

Life Group Questions

Colossians – Rooted in Christ // Sept 17-18, 2022

Qualified in Christ // Colossians 1:9-14

Introduction

Welcome to Week 2 of Colossians! Last week Pastor Ryan helped us understand how big the grace of Jesus is and how fruitful the good news of the gospel is. He also reminded us that our faith and love are not something we work up on our own. They spring from the hope laid up for us in heaven that comes because of the good news!

This week Pastor Bryan walked us through Paul's beautiful prayer for the Colossians which can also be translated into our lives. We need the same things that Paul prayed for the Colossians! We have been qualified to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

1) In Colossians we are hoping to grow, rooted and established in our faith and overflowing with gratitude. **What are 3 things you are thankful for this week?**

2) **When you pray, do you tend to pray more for physical, temporal needs—things in the here and now? Or do you pray more for spiritual needs? Why?**

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
    a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
    b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
    c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group. *Consider reading **Colossians 1:1-14** to keep the flow of thought of the letter from the previous week.*

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

1) What stood out to you during Pastor Bryan's message this past weekend?

2) In verses 9-14, what does Paul pray God would do for the Colossians?

   What does Paul pray that God would have the Colossians do?

   What concepts or words are repeated within this passage from the previous passage?

3) Based on what Pastor Bryan said in the sermon, what does it mean to "be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding?"

   Do you know anyone who you think lives from this type of knowledge/wisdom/understanding?

   Have you experienced living from this type of knowledge/wisdom/understanding at some point in your life?

4) In these first few chapters of Colossians notice how often Paul and Timothy state what is true, rather than giving commands to their readers. Chapter 3 begins with "Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above…", marking the change from statements of truth to commands to live out that truth. This structure is common in Paul's letters: He first lays a foundation of what is true about God, what is true about Christ, and what is true about the recipients as believers in Christ. Only then does he move on to telling the recipients of his letters how to live out truth. Keeping this idea in mind, what does Colossians 1:9-14 teach us about walking in a manner worthy of the Lord?

What is the source of this type of walk? (v. 9, 11-14)

5) N.T. Wright is a commentator who often puts scripture in common language. *"The foundation of what he prays for is that the new Christian instinct may become firmly implanted in them. Just as the mother duck wants her brood [ducklings] to be able to work out for themselves how to feed, to avoid danger, and to live wisely in a threatening environment, so Paul longs to see young Christians coming to know for themselves what God's will is (verse 9). They need 'wisdom and spiritual understanding'; not just book-learning (though some of that may help) or human traditions (though they are often useful, too), but a deep inner sense of who they now are, of the newly created human life which they have received from God, and of what will nurture it or harm it. Christian teachers can talk till they're blue in the face, but unless their hearers have this inner sense of wisdom and understanding, this awareness of the true God loving them and shaping their lives in a new way, it won't produce genuine disciples."*

- N.T. Wright*, Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters*

How does this quote help you understand Paul's prayer in this section?

6) In this passage, we learn that the Father has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light, rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son, redeemed us, and forgiven our sins. This is one of many areas where we tend to say we believe God's Word, but we rarely live as if His Word is true. Do you believe that (or do you live like) you are qualified, a saint in the light, rescued from darkness, a redeemed and forgiven citizen of the Kingdom of Love? Why or why not?

What would change in your life this week if you were to really live out the truth that you are qualified, a saint in the light, rescued from darkness, a redeemed and forgiven citizen of the Kingdom of Love?

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts. **Next week in Life Group, take a few moments to share how the Lord may have used this exercise in your life.**

Praying Scripture: Consider praying Paul's prayer for the Colossians each morning this next week. Pray it for yourself or for others. As you pray these same words each day, try not to do it mindlessly or on autopilot. Pay attention to the words and pay attention to which words the Holy Spirit is drawing your attention to on a given day. Interact with Jesus about those words. Ask Him what he may be wanting to say to you about your life through these words.

Meditating on Scripture: Take time to read Colossians 1:1-14 each day this next week. Consider reading it from a different translation like The Message, just to hear the descriptions differently. Ask God what he wants to say to you through this passage.

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of "coming together" is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say "Amen" aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?

Next Week: Read Colossians 1:15-23