

Irreversible Changes

Do you know that the apostle Paul did not set out to write a book of systematic theology? He sent personal letters. He had a pastoral heart toward the believers in Colossae and his love and concern for these saints overflowed, giving them encouragement, and calling them back to remember foundational gospel truth, warning and instructing them in who they were in Christ and how they were called to live by God's grace as His redeemed people. Now as we have been studying the letter to the Colossians together over the past several months it is a good thing to be reminded that sometimes it is possible to miss the big picture if we read too quickly. Do you ever find that in small group Bible study there is a desire on the part of all of us to jump right to the application - what does this passage mean for me today? You see - if we focus only on ourselves and our immediate need of the moment then we are likely to miss the underlying themes of God's word, and the heart of the good news of His grace toward us. You need to know that Paul gives reasons, there are truths given that form the foundation for all of the duties that we are called to live out as believers in Christ. Tonight let's take a focused look at some of these foundations - theological realities that define who we are in Christ and by His grace we will magnify Him for how He has demonstrated His power to change our lives forever - working in us a great salvation and transformation to the glory of God alone.

Open your Bibles to Colossians 1.9-14.

“For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Now look closely at verses 12-13 and notice what our Father in heaven has accomplished in us:

“the Father, who *has qualified us* to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He *rescued us* from the domain of darkness, and *transferred us* to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom *we have redemption* through His blood, the *forgiveness* of sins.”

He has *qualified* us who were once *unfit* to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

He has *rescued* us from the domain of darkness when we were in *bondage*.

He has *transferred* us to the kingdom of His beloved Son while we were still enemies and *alienated* from God.

He has *redeemed* us while we were choosing our own way - *lost* in sin.

He has *forgiven* our sins while we were infinitely *guilty*.

Qualified, rescued, transferred, redeemed, and forgiven. Praise God for His grace to us who once were: *disqualified*, in *bondage*, and *alienated*, and *lost*, and *guilty*!

How were we disqualified? We are sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. The disobedience of our first parents was an infinite disqualification and a corruption of all of their children after them. The fall of the first man into sin produced mankind that has fallen from holiness *by nature*. Our natural inclination to sin produced actual thoughts, words, and deeds of sin that are violations of God’s holy law which is the one perfect standard that must be kept in order to make us fit for God’s heaven. We were disqualified by nature from sharing in the inheritance of the saints in light and we

proved it by loving darkness and hating the light and we would not come into the light lest our deeds be exposed. In Him is light and there is no darkness at all. Who can stand before a holy God in the blazing brightness of His purity, His goodness, His perfect righteousness? He cannot allow some darkened rebellious heart into His presence for eternity. A miracle of grace must happen to change that heart. Our darkness must be removed. Our disqualification must be taken away. Who has qualified you? Do you get some share of the glory by your good efforts in making yourself a better person? Do you get to claim credit for earning your inheritance with the saints - His chosen ones - in the light? No. How ridiculous. His saints are saints by the will of the Father. You may say, "*Well I chose to believe in Him!*" Ah, but you cannot even choose Him until the Father has made you willing in the day of His power. God alone is the one who qualifies you. On His terms. By His rules. To His glory alone. The text is clear. God the Father accomplishes the work and has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

How were we then in bondage? What did we need to be rescued from? Our bondage was the slavery of our wills to sin and Satan which made us children of wrath and condemned already. We did not have the power to flee from the wrath that is to come because the god of this world had blinded our eyes and we could not even see the provision of the Savior that was sent for us. First, the Father, by His kindness, mercy, and grace, gave us eyes to see. We were set free from the bondage of spiritual blindness. Then He gave us a renewed will to turn to Christ, and to believe in the name of His only begotten Son, granting us the liberty of faith. The fact that we would not naturally choose Christ in the midst of our bondage was no excuse. But actually it proves the depth of our depravity.

How were we once alienated from God? How were we His enemies? God did not choose you to be saved because there was something in you that would one day be inclined to believe in him. He didn't use His infinite foreknowledge to discern that one day you would be smart enough or spiritual enough or good enough to obey the truth of the gospel. No. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. He came into

the world to save sinners. While we were enemies in our minds through wicked works as it says in Colossians 1.21 yet now he has reconciled. God had to send His only Son to die on a cross and suffer the infinite alienation for us, in our place. When our Lord Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?” He was bearing all of the wrath due to an enemy of God, literally a flood of His judgment so that our sins, placed upon Christ as our substitute sin-bearer, could be drowned in the depths of the sea forever.

Listen - This is our starting point in this life as sons and daughters of Adam and Eve: we are enemies of God by nature, lost and in bondage to our sin and our guilt, and disqualified from all of the blessings and joys of being in the presence of God forever. And it is important to remember these things and to pay attention to all of the words that are in Scripture that draw sharp boundaries. The word of God makes exclusive claims because it is an exclusive message. Do you know that the Letter to the Colossians wasn't written to pagans who worshipped idols or the Greek philosophers and skeptics of Paul's day? Notice it says, “The Father has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Don't you see? Here the text tells us plainly that there is one kingdom made up of specific saints who have been particularly chosen for a specific inheritance in God. Christ came to rescue a certain number - us. He didn't come in order to die only to make salvation possible - to only make it possible for some to choose Him. He had us on His mind. Do you know that he had you on His mind? And this text is exclusively for all of those who will ever call on the name of the Lord. Be certain that there will be no one in hell whom Christ died to redeem. His death on the cross is effectual and it is powerful. All of His saints will receive their inheritance. Can we be transferred out of the kingdom of darkness by the power of God and then be taken out of that kingdom of His dear Son? Can we decide to transfer ourselves out of the hand of Almighty God? No one can take you out of the Father's hand and no one who has been moved by God's grace to trust in Christ will ever be enslaved again to the bondage of Satan's kingdom.

We are secure in Christ because our salvation did not depend upon our choice, but upon the power of His death and resurrection to redeem us.

Ah, but you may say, “*What about all of the times that I still sin? This text says that we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin, but how can I know that I cannot sin myself out of my inheritance in His kingdom?*”

Consider Colossians 2.13:

“And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, *having forgiven us all our transgressions,*”

Verse 13 says that He has forgiven us ***all*** our transgressions. How many is ***all***? All of the sins of your past? Yes. All of the sins that I bring to Him today in confession and repentance? Yes. What about the future sins that we will commit tomorrow, either by omission or by our own free will? ***Do you see it?*** All our sins have been paid for. There is no other way to read this. It is a shocking statement and it goes against our natural inclination to trust in the quality or the frequency of our own repentings or to trust in our own personal reforms to make ourselves a better person in order to somehow earn back our favor with God. Martyn Lloyd Jones once said, “When a man says, ‘Because I have sinned I have lost it’, what he is really saying on the other side is, ‘I had it because I was good’.”

Look - it is as if the Father qualified us, rescued us, transferred us into the kingdom of His dear Son, and now we must be good enough in order to keep earning our qualification, we must strive to rescue ourselves, we must labor to remain in a state of security in the kingdom. But if this is what “grace” is - then it is no grace at all. God’s free grace must be just that. It is not a license to sin. But rather it is the one thing that enables true heart obedience, true repentance, true faith. It is by His grace alone that we are qualified. And it is by His grace alone that we are rescued. And it is by His grace alone that we are transferred out of darkness into the marvelous light of the kingdom of Christ. And if it is by His grace then it is forever accomplished and it cannot be undone. When God saves you - you are irreversibly changed! Now we are subjects of Christ’s

kingdom. Do you see that you were never free? Once you were a slave of sin and Satan. Now in Christ you are God's servant. But there is the difference between cruel compulsion and blessed sonship - blessed adoption. We are seated now with Christ our Head in the heavenly places. We enjoy the privileges of sons and daughters at the Father's fountain of living waters, while before we could only fill our own broken cisterns with water that could never satisfy . It is our delight to do His will if we are in Christ. We who once hated His word now hunger and thirst for righteousness. We who once loved darkness now walk in the light as He is in the light. We who once slaved for the wages of sin which is death now have a new Master and King who has promised us rewards in heaven - an inheritance that can never spoil, or perish, or fade, or be taken away - and consolations in this life commensurate with the sufferings of our feeble service and our often weak and faltering faith and our inconsistent love. He has done it all for us. Christ has lived the perfect life and imputed it all to us. He has fulfilled all of the qualifications of God's law and credited it to us as righteousness. He has descended into the lowest place that we would be raised up forever with Him: ***qualified, rescued, transferred, redeemed, and forgiven.*** Saints, rejoice in the sovereign grace of your Savior tonight. To God alone be the glory. Amen.