

**Colossians 1: 1-12; “The Joy of Being a Christian”, A Sermon Delivered at the
Premier Estates Nursing Home by Pastor Paul Rendall,
on the afternoon of July 24th, 2016.**

There are many things which need to be learned in living the Christian life, but the precious thing about this learning process is that it is sweet to the soul of the person who has been changed by the grace of Christ. And the reason that it is sweet, is that you have come to know the truth concerning what Christ has done for sinners, and this truth has set you free. You know that the truth of the gospel and the word of God has set you free from the bondage of sinful thoughts and sinful ways of doing things; things which are natural to the person who does not know Christ. This being set free leads to tremendous joy in the life of the Christian; joy inexpressible and full of glory. Let me give you a few reasons why. 1st – It is a joyful thought to the Christian that they have come to know imputed grace. 2nd – It is a joyful thought to the Christian that they have come to know imparted grace as well. And 3rd – It is a joyful thought to the Christian that come to have a spiritual understanding of God’s will for their life.

1st of all – It is a joyful thought to the Christian that they have come to know the imputed grace of Christ.

Think with me about verse 2 of our text: “To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now, when Paul says, “To the saints and faithful brethren”, he is not trying to make a distinction between the two; that somehow saints are different from faithful brethren; that they are two separate categories of Christians. The saints of God are the faithful brethren that he is addressing. Paul uses the same kind of language in his letter to the Romans, chapter 1, verse 7 – “To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints.” The reason that all Christians are saints is because they have been chosen by God before the foundation of the world, and become true Christians because they were effectually called by God’s Spirit, who worked in their dead heart; working in such a way that they wanted to place their faith in the gospel; in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Sadly, I must report to you that there has come to be a distinction in the Roman Catholic Church that somehow saints are those who by their good works have attained to a higher position in the Church; and that their becoming a saint is because of their works. In that church, it is the Ecclesiastical hierarchy who confers this title on a person in that church. They are canonized, after their death, as one of the saints, if they have been martyred or if they have do enough good works to help other people. And the Roman Catholic church recognizes this by a process of evaluation; looking at their life to see whether they are worthy according to their own human standards. If they believe that a certain Roman Catholic person has done these great things, then their life is evaluated and their great worth is recognized by supposedly qualified men.

But the Bible knows nothing of all that. A saint, according to the Bible, is a sinful person whom God has had mercy upon. They are one who has received Christ as their Savior from all of their sins. And they have publicly owned Him to be Lord of their life because they have submitted themselves to believe the gospel. A saint becomes a saint at the moment of their conversion to Christ by faith in what Christ has done for them. If any sinner trusts in Him, they will be saved and become a saint of God. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life of obedience to God’s holy law. Let me preach to you the gospel of Christ: The Lord Jesus has kept all the commandments of God perfectly, and thus He has fulfilled the law on our behalf. Furthermore, He became obedient to the point of death; even the death of the cross, so that the person believing in Him might not have to suffer the wrath of God against their sin, upon themselves, forever in the lake of fire. All persons outside of Christ are under the wrath of God because of

their sins. Something radical had to be done so that you, or any person descended from Adam, could be saved. You must believe in the promise of salvation in Christ. Christ must come to be seen by you as your great substitute; both in righteousness and in His suffering for you, if you are to become a Christian and be seen by God as one of His saints.

But when you see Christ as your substitute, the joyful truth is, that all of your sins are forgiven and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to you. Christ righteousness is charged to your legal account, and you are no longer held guilty on account of all of these sins that you have committed during the course of your life. God looks upon you, the sinner, as righteous. And He looks upon Christ on the cross as the sinner, and a transaction takes place; His obedience for your disobedience. His righteous is exchanged for your unrighteousness. Even though the Lord Jesus never sinned, He became sin in the sense that He literally took your place at the cross, if you are a person who believes in Him. And so God can now look at you as righteous and holy for His sake. O what a blessed truth this is! You are seen as righteous and holy through God's having imputed Christ's righteousness to you, from the moment you first sincerely place your faith in Him. All of your sins are laid to Christ's account. And all of Christ's righteousness is charged to your account. You are therefore freed from the law's condemnation, and you are removed from under God's righteous wrath, and now He is able to look at you as perfectly accepted in the Beloved – In Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let me ask you now whether you have entered by faith into what Christ has done on behalf of sinners who want to deal with their sins. Do you see your need to receive the benefits of this great transaction? God has done all of these great things related to your salvation through Christ's becoming a man like one of us, and He can give you salvation because Jesus was without sin, and He has suffered so that you might come and receive the free gift of salvation. All that He has done for sinners to purchase this great redemption should be believed by you today; at this moment, if you never have believed in the gospel before. Once you believe, you will never be condemned or put to shame at the Day of judgment, at the end of the world, when the Lord Jesus returns in flaming fire, and will officiate as the great Judge in that day. Do you belong to Christ? Are you now "in Christ" or are you "in Adam"? All who are in Adam shall not only die physically at some point, but they shall also perish forever if they do not take Christ to be their Savior. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6: 23)

Now 2nd – It is a joyful thought to the Christian that they have come to know imparted grace as well.

We can take our cue from the words, "faithful brethren in Christ" in verse 2. A saint, a believer in Christ Jesus should be striving to be faithful to the Lord's word and to love all other saints; all other Christians who have been saved because they believed God's word to them in the gospel, and were saved from their sins. The apostle Paul says in verse 3 that he was, "praying always for the believers at Colosse, having heard of their faith in Christ and of their love for all of the saints; because of the hope was laid up in heaven"; now that they had heard the gospel and knew the grace of God in truth. Ephraim was the minister who had preached to them the gospel, and he had told Paul of their love for him and all other Christians; a love which had been produced in them by the working of the Holy Spirit. Did you know that when you believe in Jesus that you received the Holy Spirit, not only as an influence, but as a Person, into your life? We are told in other places in the Scriptures that He will never leave you, nor forsake you; that He will teach you and lead you into all the truth of what you will need to know to become holy and wise? And because you have believed in Jesus, you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise as a guarantee of your inheritance in Christ. When the Holy Spirit did that mighty work of regeneration in your heart, causing you to be born again, He also poured out the love of God

in your heart, (Romans 5: 5) and set up His residence there, to so work in you that you would be able to bear fruit for God in good and righteous attitudes and good and righteous works.

This is the life of a Christian, and it is based upon God's imparted grace. The grace which is imparted by the Holy Spirit, day by day in the life of Christian, leads them to be able to bear fruit to God. His working leads them to consider their attitudes and actions; whether their life matches up with the righteousness which we find exhibited in the Savior's life. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. The whole emphasis of the Christian life in terms of the joy that the Christian experiences is because they know that all of these good fruits of the Spirit are not something which they cannot do by the strength of their determination, but rather only because they are abiding in Christ. They are considering the imputed grace that they have been given, and they are considering the imparted grace which God has been working into their hearts every day; and they do not want to receive this grace in vain. The way that you will know that you are not receiving the grace of God in vain is there is a love for God in your heart every day, and a love for the brethren every day; to see how you might do them good, and to see how you might further Christ's cause and kingdom in relation to them and others whom you are providentially brought into contact with. Is there this love? Is there this joy and peace in believing in Christ and learning to do God's will from a cheerful heart? Is there an unselfish consideration of how you might help further Christ's cause and kingdom right where you are; whether it is in the church you have joined, or whether it is here in the Nursing Home where you live?

And then 3rd – It is a joyful thought to the Christian that they have come to have a spiritual understanding of God's will for their life.

Verses 9-12 – “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” You can see here from this prayer of Paul's that God's will for every Christian is that they may walk worthy of the Lord; that is, worthy of all that God and Christ have done for them. It is pleasing to God that the Christian be a fruitful and profitable servant in relation to every good work that they do. As the days go by, it is God's will that you would increase in knowledge, and that you would be strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power in your living according to the truth of the Bible. It is God's will that you would learn patience in the midst of trials, and learn to endure hardships in relation to your persevering in doing what is right, and turning away from what is wrong. This is your sanctification; this is what God is calling you to; to persevere in holiness; to keep yourself unstained from the world, and to help those in need; widows and orphans, and others in their distress. This is your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality and know that God did not call you to uncleanness, but in holiness.

There is indeed much to learn in living the Christian life. And so, you should ask yourself: Have I begun this great journey of living the Christian life with Christ as my Savior, God as my Father, and the Holy Spirit as my Helper? And having begun, have I attained to this blessed state of realizing that it is God the Father who has qualified me to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light; that my faith and doing the will of God does not rest upon my own strength and determination, but upon the grace which Christ supplies? Do you have joy in serving Jesus? Do you have joy in the midst of trials and difficulties? Do you know the joyful reality of Christ strengthening you according to His glorious power for the attaining of all steadfastness? Certainly this is what Paul was praying for in relation to the saints in Colosse.

And this is also my prayer for you as well. This is what will sustain you in living your life in whatever state you are in. This is what will convince you that you shall have the grace to persevere in doing what is right to the end of your life. It is that having found Christ, you have come to realize that He will give you the strength to persevere in doing what God has commanded that you do; those things which are found in His blessed word. And this on-going realization of Christ for you, and Christ with you, will also bring to you to realize that the joy of the Lord is your strength. It is a joy which no man can take away from you, and it will remain in you and with you forever. May it be so for each of us.