What Makes Christians Most Thankful?
Colossians 1:12-14
2134

I've entitled our study for tonight "What Makes Christians Most Thankful?" What makes Christians most thankful? If you remember from our last study of this particular chapter, the Apostle Paul is praying for the Colossians, something which is rather common to the introduction to his letters, to mention that he's praying for a certain group of people. And it is no different in the case of the Colossians.

If you look at verse 9, he says: "For this cause, we also, since the day we heard, do not cease to pray for you." That's a very common response inthe heart of the Apostle Paul to the need and the life of the people to whom he wrote. He is praying for them.

Back in the sixth chapter of Acts, the Apostle said, "We will give ourselves continually to the ministry of the Word and to prayer. This was true in Paul's life. The ministry of the Word was part of his ministry and the other was prayer. And here he expresses the fact that he's been praying for them.

Now, his prayer, as we saw last time, has two parts. The first part is petition and the second part is praise. The first part is to request something and the second part is to thank God for something. Verses 9 to 11 is the petition and verses 12 to 14, the praise.

Now, we have already studied verses 9 to 11, so tonight we'll look at verses 12 to 14 which is the praise, or the thanks, that Paul gives for what God has already done.He's already requested some things to be done, and now thanks God for what Fie has already done. And I think, in a very real sense, this can set for us a model, or a pattern, for our own prayer life. That we are to be occupied, I think, with two broad categories in our prayers and that is petition and praise. It should not be all petition, it should be all petition and praise. It should not be all praise, but it should be petition. As we saw this morning, you have not because you ... what? ...you ask not. And so, there needs to be both sides in our prayer life and to be sure there is a balance.

Just to illustrate that to you and to show you that that was indeed the pattern of the Apostle Paul, you are in Colossians chapter 1, if you look back at the fourth chapter of Philippians which would just be the prior page. You look at the sixth verse: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer, even supplication with thanksgiving." You have there a definition of prayer. Prayer is supplication, or petition, with thanksgiving. It is asking and thanking. It is that beautiful balance.

In I Timothy chapter 2 and verse 1: "I exhort therefore," Paul says, "that first of all supplication, prayer, intercession and giving of thanks be made for all men." Those terms combine petition and praise, asking and thanking. And those really become the ingredients to any biblical pattern for prayer.

Now we've already discussed the petition, you can go back to Colossians 1, we've already discussed that fantastic petition that he prayed in verses 9 through 11. And I'm telling you, it's so exciting just to think about those things. I know your heart was enriched as we shared them. And now we're going to move to the thanks that he gives in verse 12. Notice verse 12 and how it begins. "Giving thanks unto the Father." Now, that's a very basic idea. And I wonder sometimes, and I want to spend a little time talking about thanks, I wonder sometimes if we really understand how thanksgiving is to fit into our lives. Every Wednesday when I come here and I look at the prayer sheet and see a whole long line of things being requested and a little tiny piece of things being responded to, or thanksgiving made for, I wonder whether we understand the balance. I wonder whether it isn't very easy to forget to say thanks when we're use to getting what we want and that's what God is use to doing, you know, meeting needs. It's as simple as the words of Asaph, who wrote in Psalm 50, verse 14: "Offer unto God thanksgiving..." I mean, it's that simple. It's commanded of us to be thankful.

In Psalm 69 and verse 30, it says: "I will praise the name of God," and I like this, "with a song and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord, better than an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs." You know what God likes better than a sacrificial animal? True praise, true thanks that comes out of a heart that is filled with thanksgiving and is offered both in word and in song.

In Psalm 107, it's verse 21, 1 think, it says ... well, look at verse 21 and 22: "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving ... God wants from us thanksgiving.

Psalm 92, verse 1: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord andto sing praises unto Thy name, 0 Most High."

At the end of Hebrews, it's an interesting statement that is made in Hebrews 13:15: "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.

So, we are to thank God. We are to thank Him when we talk. We are to thank Him when we sing. We are to thank Him when we pray. Thanksgiving is to make up a part of our life and I guess I'm as guilty as anybody else in failing so very many times to thank God. It seemsa simple thing to do, to set a little time aside every day and just thank Him, but we forget, don't we? We don't forget to ask Him, we only forget to thank Him.

And I thought about it. You know the angels thank God? That's right. The angels spend a lot of time doing that if Revelation 4:9 is any indication. "And those living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him that is seated on the throne." And then in the seventh chapter of Revelation and the eleventh verse: "And all the angels stood about the throne, and the elders, and the four living creatures," and so forth and so on, "And they said, Amen, blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving to God forever and ever."

Later on in the book of Revelation you find the angels doing it again. In the sixteenth verse of the eleventh chapter, and here you have the...the 24 elders apparently joining together with the angels, saying: "We give Thee thanks, 0 Lord God Almighty." The angels do it.

You want to know something interesting? Christ did it. Christ spent time thanking God. In Matthew

11, and this is very basic, but I just want to remind you of it, Matthew 11:25, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, 0 Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes."

In Matthew chapter 26, and I want to show you how often Jesus did this...Matthew 26:26 says: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is My body. He took the cup and gavethanks and gave it to them."

In John chapter 6, and these are only samples, verse 11: "And Jesus took the loaves and when He had given thanks," and here He is feeding the 5,000, "He distributed to the disciples." But not until He had given thanks.

At the graveside of Lazarus, in John 11:41, "'Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me." This is the pattern of the life of Christ...to thank God. This is the pattern of the angels in heaven ... to thank God. And this is commanded of us, we must be thankful to God. He is the One who provides everything.

In Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20, it says: "And giving thanks always for all things, unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Giving thanks always for all things.

First Timothy 1:12, Paul says: "And I thank Christ Jesus."

In Romans, Paul says in chapter 1 verse 8: "First, I thank my God." First, I thank my God.

We're in Colossians, look at Colossians chapter 3 and verse 17: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."

And there areillustrations in the Bible of thanksgiving, many of them. We are to give thanks privately. Daniel, such a faithful man, the sixth chapter, I think it's the tenth verse: "Now, when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house," he knew the decree forbad him to do this, but he went into his house, "His windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem," the custom of the Jews. "He kneeled on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did previously." We are to give thanks privately like Daniel did, privately. We also are to give thanks publicly.

In Psalm 35, just to serve as an illustration, verse 18 says: "I will give Thee thanks in the great congregation. I will praise Thee among many people."

Now, we could go on and on and on all night talking about passages of Scripture that deal with giving thanks. Suffice it to say this, we are commanded to do it...when we speak, when we pray, when we sing. The angels do it. Christ did it. We are called upon to do it, privately, publicly. And by contrast, I would add this - that the wicked don't ever do it.

In Romans 1:21: "Because, when they knew God they glorified Him not as God, neither were ... what?... thankful." One thing about people without God, they don't thank God. That's a tragic thing. We are the only ones who can give God the credit, who can give God the thanks that He is so worthy

of.

What are we to thank Him for? Did you ever think about that? What are we to thank God for? Well, the Bible gives so many illustrations:1 for food, for example. Food ... and I know most of us are aware of this, we can't even eat without saying: "Lord, bless the food. Amen." You know, and we pass this on from generation to generation. We were eating lunch today and Melinda says: "God bless Mommy and the food. Amen." Man, she was hungry, you know. She's only two and a half years old, she's already got the lingo, just get it over with and get at it. That's typical.

First Timothy 4 sort of sets the pattern. It says there will be false teachers in the last days, forbidding to marry, commanding to abstain from foods which God has created to receive with ... what?... thanksgiving. Food is to be received with thanksgiving. Every creature of God is good and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving. People always worry about what they're going to eat. Now, I don't want to get too trapped into this, cause some of you people are health-food people, but it says that everything is ... every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving. If you sort of thank God for it, you kind of put Him on the spot to bless it. Right? Thank God for food, Jesus did...in John 6, didn't He? Before He fed the 5,000 plus? Took it and He thanked God and distributed it.

You know something else we're to thank God for? I like this one; we're to thank God for God ... to thank Him for who He is. Listen to Psalm 30, verse 4: "Sing unto the Lord, 0 ye saints of His; and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." Thank God for who He is. Thank God for His attributes. Thank God for His character. Thank God for His holiness. Thank God that He is a holy God. And you can add to that all the other attributes, they're mentioned many places in the Psalms. But Psalm 97:12 says the same thing essentially: "Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." Now, maybe holiness is the sort of the superimposed attribute that covers the others and thank God for who He is, is what's in the Psalmist's mind.

But in Psalm 75 he adds another thought: "Thank God for His nearness. Psalm 75:1 "Unto Thee, 0 God, we give thanks; unto Thee do we give thanks for that Thy name is near, Thy wondrous works declare." We're so glad You're near, God, we know You're near because we see You working all around us. You see? Aren't you thankful that God isn't way off somewhere? Now that's a good verse for the deist who thinks that God spun the world and then went away and left it. The Psalmist says - Thank God that He didn't do that but He's near. And it's evident by what He's doing right in our midst. And it goes on and on like that through the Psalms.

And Itell you another thing; I thank God for my salvation, don't you? First Timothy 1:12: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who hath enabled me in that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious, but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. Thank Christ Jesus," he says, "for what He's done in my life."

Now, here's another thing that I found in Scripture, and just to give you an idea, a sample, that we're to be thankful for and that is... and I think we forget this, we're to thank God for the progress in the lives of other people. We're to thank God for the spiritual growth of other people. Do you ever really stop to thank God for what He's doing? You know, it's the old story of the squeaky wheel gets the oil, and we wind up praying only for the problem people. But do you ever stop to thank God for what He's doing in the lives of the people who don't give us any problems?

You know, in II Corinthians chapter 8, we have the account of the Macedonians. Bless those dear people, they were so poor it was just tragic. But they heard about the Jerusalem saints being poor too. And you had a couple of groups of poor people. But the Macedonians, out of their poverty, gave abundantly. In verse 2, "In great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality." Their joy caused them to give out of their poverty a magnanimous offering to the Jerusalem saints. And Paul says in response in II Corinthians 8:16: "Thanks be to God, who put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you." Thanks be to God who is working in the heart of Titus to make him love you like you love those people. Thank God for the progress. Thank God for what He's doing in your life.

And again, back to Romans 1:8, he says: "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all," what about it? "That your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world, I thank God for Your testimony." Do you ever thank God for the testimony of congregations? Have you ever thanked God for the testimony of churches? Have you ever thanked God for the testimony of men and women whom God is using?

In II Thessalonians, as Paul writes his second letter to that very wonderful church, he says: "We are bound," verse 3, chapter 1, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren." Why? "Because your faith grows exceedingly and the love of every one of you all toward each other is abounding." We're thanking God because of your progress.

In I Thessalonians, even, chapter 2, 1 think, verse 13: "This cause also, thank we, God, without ceasing because when you received the Word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men but as it is in truth the Word of God which effectually works in you also that believe." Thank God.

Well, we're to thank God for food and God and God's attributes and God's nearness and salvation and spiritual progress in others and I could go on. That's just a sampling. We're to thank God ... if you want to know the truth, we're to thank God for ... what?...everything... everything. It's all included. Paul says to the Ephesians: "I cease not to give thanks for you ... period." I just thank God for you in total. That's important.

In II Corinthians chapter 9 verse 11, 1 know you've probably got blisters if you've been trying to follow me through the pages, but just hang in there. In II Corinthians 9:11: "Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness which causes through us thanksgiving to God." Just that general blessing of God ought to bring about a thanksgiving response. And, of course, you know what I Thessalonians 5:18 says: "In everything do...what?...give thanks, for this is the will of God." That's another one of those simple things that people make hard. Ohhh, I wonder what the will of God is ... I'm searching for the will of God. You know what the will of God is? Say thanks to Him. That's the will of God? That's it. That's part of it. Not so mysterious.

In chapter 5 of Ephesians, essentially the same thing. In First Timothy chapter 2, essentially the same thing. It just continues to repeat itself in Scripture. We are to be thankful, but ... Let's move to the point of Paul's words in Colossians. The primarypoint of thanksgiving ... what is the primary objective of thanksgiving? What is, as I said at the very beginning, the thing for which Christians are most thankful? What is that...that primary issue for which we bring thanks to God? You know what it

is? It is the work of Christ, right? It's the work of Christ. That is the thing for which we are most thankful.

Again, in II Corinthians 9:15, says this: "Thanks unto God for His ... what?... unspeakable gift." Thanks for His unspeakable gift. We're most thankful for Jesus Christ and His perfect work. In Romans 6:17, listen, Paul says: "But God be thanked," why? What are you thanking Him for, Paul? "That where as you were the servants of sin, you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you, being then made free from sin you became the servants of righteousness." Thank God for that transformation.

And the same thing comes in Romans 7:24: "0 wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Now what does he say? "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," He's the one who delivers us, thank God.

In I Corinthians chapter 15, verse 57: "But thanks be to God who giveth us ... what? ...the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.- The primary issue.

Second Corinthians 2:14: "But thanks be to God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ."

Now, beloved, that really is the key thing. If you've been studying I Corinthians with us, you remember I Corinthians 1:4. Paul says, "I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." Thank You, God, for salvation.

Now, the reason I've spent so much time belaboring the point is I Just want to kind of pound it in a little bit. It's important to be thankful, and most of all for salvation...that's the primary thing.

Now, in Colossians 1, look at it with me, Paul expresses thanks for salvation. His idea here is to thank God for the salvation that has been provided in Christ. Let's read 12 to 14, you watch. "Giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sin."

Thanks unto the Father...and then he sums up the doctrine of salvation in three great statements. It's as if Paul says - Father, I have petitioned you on the behalf of these Christians and now I want to thank You for three great truths regarding salvation...three great realities. You know what they are? Let me give you three words and that's our outline: inheritance, deliverance and transference. I want to thank You for three things: inheritance, who has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Deliverance, who has delivered us from the power of darkness. Transference, and has transferred us into the kingdom of His dear Son in whom we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sin.

Now, these three things make up Paul's thanksgiving. Let's look at the first one, inheritance. "Giving thanks unto the Father," and there by using the term Father he's emphasizing the personal relational aspect of our union with God. "Who has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Paul says that salvation is the granting of an inheritance. Now we talked this morning a little bit about

that, didn't we? The legacy of Christ to His own. Now, Paul is approaching it from a little different standpoint and he's saying here - God, thank You for bringing us into the inheritance that belongs to the saints. I'm glad he uses the term Father because this really emphasizes the relationship properly. God, at one time, in a man's life is judge. He looks down on a guilty sinner, condemned by the working of His own laws of holiness, but by the grace of God and the act of Christ and by our faith in Christ He stops being a judge and becomes a Father. And notice what it says - He has made us fit...' That's a crucial phrase and I want you to look at it for a minute. Literally, in the Greek - Who has qualified us ... who has qualified us. That particular verb is only used one other place in Scripture and it simply means to qualify someone...to be given the right ... to be given the title ... to be given the position ... to be given the privilege ... to be fit. It's not talking about our practice it's talking about our position. He has labeled us qualified to enter into the inheritance. And I ask you, on what basis am I qualified? On the basis of my work? On the basis of whose work? The finished work of Christ.

Now, believe me, before God in His sovereign grace qualified us, we were really unqualified, weren't we? Look for a minute at Ephesians chapter 2 and let me just show you how unqualified we were. Ephesians 2:1, "And you who were dead in trespasses and sins in which in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all had our manner of life in time past and the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Now that's disqualification, folks. You're dead, you're dead in trespasses and sin, you walk according to the course of the world, you're under the power of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit working in you as a son of disobedience, your manner of life in time past is dominated by the lust of the flesh, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the mind, sum it all up and you're nothing but a target for wrath. Now, that's disqualified. God looks you over and says - There's no way that that guy enters into My heaven. He is not qualified. There is no way that there shall be any inheritance granted to him. He is not qualified.

Look at chapter 2 of Ephesians verse 11, "Wherefore remember that you in time past, pagans, Gentiles, in the flesh who were called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands," a little sarcasm there. He's simply saying you are the Gentiles whom the Jews who have circumcision, strictly physical, call the uncircumcision just to remind you who you are, outside the privileges. And at that time you were, watch this, "Without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Now, that's to be disqualified.

Christless ... look at it, without Christ ... Christless. Stateless... aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Covenantless...strangers from the covenants of promise. Hopeless ... having no hope and Godless ... without God in the world. That's to be unqualified.

In Epehsians 4, look at verse 17: "This I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as Gentiles walk." The word other doesn't appear in the better Greek renderings. "Walk not as Gentiles walk," listen, "in the vanity of their mind," that's self-centeredness. "Having the understanding darkened," that's ignorance. "Being alienated from the life of God," that's death. Through the ignorance that is them because of the blindness of their hearts." "Who being past feeling," or sensitivity, "have given themselves over to lasciviousness," that's shamelessness, "to work all uncleanness with greediness." The idea is simply that there is unblushing obscenity, that last phrase.

Christless, stateless, covenantless, hopeless, Godless, self-centered, ignorant, dead, shameless and having an unblushing obscene mind...such a person, my friend, is unqualified. And you want to hear something interesting? Such a person is you, and such a person is me. But in spite of that, God in His grace chose to qualify us for an inheritance. And remember it; look at verse 12 in Colossians 1 again. "Thank God, who made us qualified." Did you ever do anything to get qualified? No. That's an act of grace.

You say - John, I'm so glad I'm qualified. What am I qualified for? I'd like to know. All right, verse 12: "Qualified to be a partaker of the inheritance." Now, that's exciting. Partaker means, and this is a very important word because it adds a dimension here that you need to understand. Partaker means to receive by lot or portion. And it means to receive personally and individually. In other words, if a...if an inheritance is left and there are ten people who are to inherit it, each receives his own lot and his own portion. There's not any overlapping ... you seven get this and you twelve get this...no ... no. Every individual has his individual allotment and that's the term. We have been qualified to receive a personal inheritance, something that belongs to us as individuals. That's exciting.

Now, what is this inheritance? Well, in the Old Testament, this is an Old Testament term because it comes early out of God's promise to His holy people Israel when He provided an earthly inheritance in the land Canaan, a land they could actually touch, in a tangible inheritance. But the inheritance that Paul is speaking of here, bouncing off of that Old Testament idea, is a higher level inheritance. It's a more enduring inheritance. It's a...It's a different kind. In fact, Peter calls it this - An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that fadeth not away ... I Peter 1. This is not an earthly inheritance, this is not a transitory passing inheritance, this is something that never will pass.

Now, you and I, beloved, have been qualified to be partakers. That's present tense incidentally. You say - When do I get my inheritance? You already have it. You say - I do? That's right. You say - Well, I haven't used much of it. Well, that's your problem. But you have it. You know, when we think about an inheritance, we have only a future concept, we associate ... we say - Somebody's an heir. We say - We are heirs with Christ, or jointheirs and we think Isn't that great? Someday we're going to get something. No...you already got it. We think about it in the sense of the future but in the New Testament the believer's heritage is present, actual, enjoyed, right here, right now.

In Romans 8 verse 16, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," And if children, then heirs, heirs to God, or heirs of God and jointheirs with Christ. We are, right now, in on the inheritance.

Now, let's further look at verse 12 and then we'll pull it all together, just giving you the terminology. "Partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." The only people who get in on the inheritance are...whom?...the saints. And who are the saints? The people...what? ...walking in the...in the light. That's just to qualify everything. God has qualified certain people to be partakers of the inheritance. The people are always the saints and the saints are always the people walking in the light.

What does it mean to walk in the light? Well, light represents two things, I think, biblically. One is intellectual and the other is moral. Intellectually, light represents truth. Morally, light represents purity. And the saints are characterized by a knowledge of truth and of moral behavior, a pure behavior. And it is the people who walk in the truth and walk in purity who are the saints and who are the ones who are receiving the inheritance.

In Acts 26 verse 18, this is what-Paul said, he was commissioned by God to preach to the Gentiles, "To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light." Listen, "And from the power of Satan unto God that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in me." Now, when you look at Colossians 1:12 to 14, you've got to know that-Paul was thinking about that very statement from the Lord when he wrote this ... cause it's all the same almost. To open their eyes, to give them light, to turn them from Satan to God, to give them forgiveness and an inheritance, by faith that is in me. And there's the key. When a man or a woman puts his faith in Christ, then he receives the inheritance, becomes a saint. What is a saint? That's somebody whose been made holy, somebody whose been separated unto God, somebody whose been set apart by faith.

So, the inheritance belongs to the saints. The saints are the people who know the truth and who live it, right? Those are the saints. And they're the ones who get the inheritance. Thank You, God... Paul says. And you know what's kind of sad about it is that anybody else does not get the inheritance. No. Just the people who walk in the truth, just the people who walk in the light, intellectual light - they know God, and moral light -they behave as godly people, not perfect, but there certainly should be indication of their life. James says: "Faith without works is ... what? ...is dead."

In I Corinthians, the tragic comparison, would be the sixth chapter and the ninth verse: "Don't you know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Neither fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God." They do not inherit. There is no inheritance for those kind of people, none at all.

In Galatians chapter 5 verse 21, he has listed all these terrible sins and he says: "Of which I tell you as I have told you in time past, they who do such things shall not inherit." It is the people in the light who receive the inheritance.

Now, let me go a step further, and this is a lot of theology, so hope you can get some of it. Now, what is the inheritance? Do you ever think about that? That's the first thing that came into my mind - what is this thing I'm going to inherit? Well, let me give it to you in broad terms because we don't want to get specific or we'll take too long, but broadly.... number one, the inheritance is eternal life. The first thing we inherit is eternal life and that is not a length of life that is a kind of life. It is not a quantity of life, it is a quality of life, it is a kind of living. It is God's life lived in me. And in Matthew chapter 19 verse 29: "Everyone that has forsaken houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for My Name's sake shall receive and hundred-fold and shall inherit everlasting life."' The people who step away from society and identify with Me, they will inherit eternal life. The first thing that I see in our inheritance is eternal life, a kind of existence.

You say - What is it, John? It's God in me. It's God living in me, God moving in me, God breathing in me, God living His life in me, that is eternal life. In case you have a problem with that definition, I John 5:20 lays it out very clear: "His Son Jesus Christ," listen, "this is the true God and eternal life." Eternal life is Christ in me. It is a quality of existence. It is God's life in me. It is the divine life in me...Christ in me. Now, that's the first thing that I inherited when I was made worthy, when I was qualified by the Father.

Even the rich young ruler came to Jesus and knew the right question: "What must I do to inherit ... what? ...eternal life?" That's the inheritance.

There's an interesting passage in Luke 10:25, it says: "And behold, a certain lawyer stood up," same thing, "tested Him saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And what was wrongwith that question was you can't do anything to inherit something, that's a gift ... that's a gift. God chooses to make you worthy, you receive the gift.

So, our inheritance is eternal life...God living in us. What a super thought. Do you realize that...just think about that...I have been qualified so that God could live in me. Now, He had to do a lot of work to bring that to pass. That took a lot of qualifying. And do you ever think about how strict God was about how He would dwell in His own temple? You know, when they started to desecrate the temple, according to Ezekiel's vision, as soon as they got garbage on the walls of idols in the temple and they started bowing down to worship the sun, they started doing all that, do you remember what God did? What did He do? He left. He said - I won't take this. And as soon as those people started to pollute and desecrate His temple, He was gone and Ichabod was written on Israel, the glory has departed. God doesn't dwell in places that aren't qualified.

And one of the things that you and I need to realize is that it's only marvelous grace, beloved, that's ever made us to be qualified to be the temple of the holy God. Great thought.

Second thing, our inheritance, very broadly speaking, includes this is kind of amazing - the whole earth ... the whole earth. Look at Matthew 5:5, this is just really exciting ... the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Another thing that is in our inheritance is the whole earth.

You say - Well, John, the whole earth, what do you mean? That certainly isn't present. Oh yeah, but it's got a future aspect. Someday Jesus is going to return and we're going to return with Him in glory, Paul says in Colossians 3, and someday when Jesus returns, we're going to reign with Him and He's going to take over the earth and that's going to be kind of exciting. I like to think about that. He says - You're going to inherit My Kingdom, in Luke 22: 29 and 30, and you're going to eat and drink at My table in the Kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel and so forth, to His disciples and ... and later on the promise is extended to the whole church in Revelation that we're going to sit with Him in His throne and...and rule over the earth. And so, we have this concept of the future, we're going to rule the earth. But have you ever thought about it in relation to the present aspect? There is a sense in which ... there's a sense in which we already rule the earth right now, a sense in which we possess the earth. You say - In what sense? Well, in the sense that now that I'm a Christian and I know that someday it's all going to be mine anyway, I'm not too concerned about getting it now. Do you ever think about that? Some people are in a mad dash to gain all the material things they can, I'm just waiting for the Kingdom and it's all going to be given to me. What's the hurry? It takes the pressure off, folks. I don't have to worry so much about trying to obtain everything in this world because someday it's going to be all mine anyway ... and yours. And I think, too, the truth of thematter is I inherit the earth also in a secondary sense, and that is that as a part of the body of Christ and a member of the church of Jesus Christ, I share everything in common with you, isn't that right? Isn't that the design of God that we hold all things in common for the mutual benefit of one another? That's what our Lord certainly had in mind when the early church began to follow the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And obviously, when Jesus had said this, He had it in mind...Mark 10:30: "He shall receive a hundred fold now in this time," if you...you know ... follow the Lord and accept the

gospel, "You'll receive a hundred fold in this time; houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions," throws that in, "and in the age to come, eternal life."

Did you ever stop to think about how many houses you had? How many ... different brothers and sisters you have? How many lands you have? How many places you can go and be at home because some brother or sister in Christ, or some Christian organization provides it for you? This is what Jesus had in mind. There is a sense in which everything is ours in commonanyway. Someday it's all going to be ours in the Kingdom. But already we're beginning to enjoy the mutual sharing of the things God has given.

So, the inheritance includes, in a very broad, broad way, eternal life, the whole earth, and then just let me add one thing that will sum it up, all the promises. That's so monstrous that...Hebrews 6:1.2 says: "That you be not slothful but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Now, think about it. The writer of Hebrews says - You will inherit the promises. What promises? All of them. All of them? All of them. When you come to Christ you immediately inherit eternal life, the whole earth and all the promises. I mean, that's incredible. You say - What's left? Nothing... nothing left. That's it.

Now, you say - But I'm not too sure I have all that now? Oh yeah, it's all yours in a limited sense, but it's going to be yours in a fuller sense in the future.

I read in Revelation 21, John's word, he said: "I saw a new heaven," remember that? "And a new earth, and the first heaven andthe first earth are passed away and there was no more sea," and he goes on. III, John, saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem coming out of heaven as a bride adorned for her husband." And then he goes through that tremendous description of the final state and all the saints are there and thenit says in verse 7: "He that overcomes," and who is he that overcomes? "But he that believeth Jesus is the Christ," I John.

All right. The believers shall inherit all things and I will be His God and he shall be My son. You're going to inherit what things? All things. Fantastic.

You say - Yeah, that sounds exciting, but I wonder how long it will last. Well, I'll tell you, Hebrews 9:15, listen to this, this is good, "For this cause, He is the mediator of the New Testament by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were unto the first testament that they who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." That's how long. This inheritance is eternal, You say Well, it sounds pretty exciting, John. No wonder Paul's giving God thanks. Well, that's right. Can you be sure about that? Well, you've got a guarantee right here in the Bible, don't you? It says so. And God signed His name to this Bible. Did you know that? God wrote this whole thing and then signed His name and it's all true.

You say - But I'm kind of skeptical, I...I'd like a guarantee. Do you think if I prayed God would drop me down a special guarantee? This is a guarantee that so-and-so will receive everything I promise, think He can do that? Oh, He already did that. Oh, He did? Oh yeah. Yeah, Ephesians 1, He already did that. What do you mean? Well, look at it ... Ephesians 1:13. You see, verse 13 ends with this: "The Holy Spirit of ... what?...promise." All right, God's promised an inheritance. Thirteenth verse ends: "The Holy Spirit of promise, who is," now mark that word, "the guarantee of our ... what? ...inheritance." What is the guarantee of our inheritance? The Holy Spirit. The word guarantee,

arrabon, interesting word, means down-payment, guarantee, it also means engagement ring. And I love that meaning. And somebody says - How do you know that God's going to take you to be with Himself, and how do you know you're going to get all that inheritance that He promised you? And I simply say because I have an engagement ring. You do? Who is it? It's the Holy Spirit. The day I was redeemed God put His Holy Spirit in me and said -There's My engagement ring, the wedding's going to come off. There's My down-payment. There's My guarantee. So, God, beloved, has apportioned to us an inheritance, an incorruptible, undefiled, never-fading-away inheritance. And He has guaranteed to us that inheritance by the indwelling Holy Spirit who is sealed to us as the Spirit of promise. And that inheritance encompasses eternal life, it encompasses the whole earth and everything that is in it and it encompasses all the promises of God, both now and forever. And the inheritance is going to last forever and ever.

Do you understand that? Can you get a grip on that? I mean, can you transport yourself out of this stupid mundane world andconceive of that? Well, I ... he ought to be done in a moment; I'm going to go home and make a pie. Ohhhhh, see? I mean, I wonder whether we ever get it...I mean, whether we ever get to these grandiose conc...most of us piddle around in the mud, you know, and - Oh yes, God's up there...lalalala, you know and we never stretch our minds to conceived of these things. No wonder Ephesians 1:18, 1 know the frustration of Paul, no wonder he prayed this: "God, I'm praying, that the eyes of your understanding might be enlightened, that you might know what is the hope of His calling and that you might know what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." You see? He says - You, Ephesians, I'm praying that you would just understand this. Man, it's frustrating. No, we ... these are unbelievable concepts and we all sort of walk away and go back and turn on our little world again and it's incredible. We forget what we're ... what we're involved in. Understand, man, will you? Paul says ... will you understand?

Understand what, Paul? His inheritance. Look at verse 18, not just His inheritance, the glory of His inheritance. Not just the glory of His inheritance, the riches of the glory of His inheritance. I'm praying that you'll understand this. You say - John, I would like to understand this inheritance ... how? Well, I think the how is in Acts 20:32. Now listen to this, Paul says to the Ephesian elders, he wanted them to understand, same group he wrote to there, "Now, brothers, I commend you to God," he's leaving them now, and listen, "I commend you to God," Acts 20:32, "and to the Word of His grace which is able to build you up," and I'll paraphrase here, "And secure to you an inheritance." Youknow what you haveto look into in order to have that secure confidence of your inheritance? What? The Word of His grace ... that's what he says. It is the Word of His grace that gives you the confidence in your inheritance. How are you ever going to understand your inheritance unless you get into the Word of His grace? The moreI study the Bible, the more I understand His inheritance, right? What an inheritance!

Colossians 1, again, Paul says - Thank You, God, for Your inheritance. Point two, these will be shorter, I took all my time on that one. Point two: "I thank You, God, for Your deliverance," verse 13. This is good, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness." The word deliver literally means to draw to oneself. The idea is that God actually took us from Satan to Himself. Aorist tense, means point action, one event past time, He did it at one moment and time.

You say - When was that moment, John? At the new birth. Do you know that there's no progress in our deliverance? The moment I put my faith in Christ, instantly I was delivered. I hear Christians talking a lot about deliverance -Oh, they want to have deliverance from this and deliverance...that's a bad wording, we're delivered. See. We've already been ... really, what you need to do is claim your

deliverance, just move on.

What have we been delivered from? The word could be well translated, and you might write this in your margin, rescued...who has rescued us from the power of darkness. Literally, the word power, the jurisdiction, of darkness, the jurisdiction, of darkness or the authority of darkness. In Luke 22, there's an excellent illustration of this, it uses the same term. Jesus is betrayed by Judas and they all come to get Jesus, the captains, the chief priests and so forth and Jesus says - Are you come as against a thief with swords and clubs? What are you doing with all the weapons, people? He says to the people coming to capture Him. "When I was daily with you in the temple, you stretched forth no hands against Me." Why are you doing this now? Listen: "But this is your hour and the jurisdiction of darkness," and He used the very same term that Paul used in Colossians 1.

What does that term mean? Jesus used the term in Luke 22 to refer to the supernatural forces marshaled by Satan against Him. The jurisdiction of darkness is a dominion of Satan. And in Luke 22 and at the capture and death of Christ, that dark power had its brief moment, but it was a very brief moment ... and it ended in total defeat. And not only did the power of darkness find itself unable to capture Jesus, but in His death He rescued out of the clutches of the power of darkness all that were His. And once rescued, beloved, we need not fear that power. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."

And Paul, at the end of Romans 16, tells us Satan is under our feet. A tremendous reality. At the cross, Satan was crushed and we were rescued from the power of darkness. Thank God for that. What hope did we have? What hope did you have? Locked into the system of Satan, on your way to hell...no hope. Thank You, Father, for my inheritance and my deliverance.

And there's a third thing...transference. That's the positive side of deliverance. Verse 13, in the middle, "And has translated us, or transferred us, into the Kingdom of His dear Son in whom," and here'sthe modifier of the Son, "we have redemption even the forgiveness of sins." Through His blood - seems to have been added into this passage and doesn't appear in the older manuscripts, although it's true and it is recorded in other places in the epistles. But the point that he makes here is that you've not just been taken out of something but you've been put into something else. What is it? The Kingdom of His dear Son. The word translate or transfer meansto totally remove or change. We've been taken out of the power of darkness and placed in the Kingdom of His dear Son. And literally, I love what the Greek says, it says - We have been, notice it, translated unto the Kingdom of the Son of His love.... unto the Kingdom of the Son of His love. The Father gives His Kingdom to the Son of His love and then He gives His Kingdom to everybody that loves His Son.

Now, what is this Kingdom? Do you ever think about that? Well, some people say it refers to the future earth. And there is an aspect of that, isn't there? That there's coming to be a future for this world when Jesus shall reign, we believe in the literal thousand-year, millennial reign of Jesus Christ on the earth and the throne of David established in the city of Jerusalem. There is coming a kingdom on earth, a restored earth that will extend into a forever new heaven and new earth. But there's more than that. The Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of the Son of His love is more than just the future, and it's more than just the general rule of God in the universe, it is a very spiritual reality right now. In fact, in Romans 14 and verse 17, it gives us a beautiful definition of it. It says: "For the Kingdom of God is not food and drink, not physical, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Yes, there is a future thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. Yes, there is a general category of God's rule in the universe, sovereignly and eternally. But also, there is a special relationship that men in this

age have with the living God when they come to Jesus Christ. And what is a kingdom? A kingdom is a groupof people ruled by a king, right? And when you became a Christian, you crowned Jesus Christ ... what? ... King and you became a subject in His Kingdom. And though He does not yet rule on earth, He is no less a King. David was still the king even when he was chased out of his kingdom by Absalom, who was -cowering in the wilderness, he was no less a king. Even though the world has chased Jesus Christ and tried to dethrone Christ and rebel against Him as Absalom did against David, He is no less a King. And even though He is absent from the earth and in the heavens, He is still the ruler of our hearts and someday will come to rule this earth.

Beloved, the church is the Kingdom ... the church of those who accept the Kingly rule of Jesus Christ; we are subjects in His Kingdom. And it's exciting to realize that we've been taken out of the jurisdiction of darkness and placed into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. There's some tremendous responsibility connected with that I think. As children of the Kingdom we should rightly represent the King, don't you think? I think we should.

In I Thessalonians 2:12, "You should walk worthy of God who has called you unto His Kingdom." If God's made you subject of His Kingdom, you ought to act like it. Walk worthy because you're reflecting on the King. In II Thessalonians 1:5, he even says some- thing else: "This is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God that you may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God for which you also suffer." We are ambassadors of the King. We may suffer for the King, but we are to walk worthy of the King.

So, we are members of a Kingdom. And that simply means that we have acknowledged the rule and the Lordship of Christ in our lives. We are the company of people ruled by Jesus Christ. All that that is in the future we have yet to see. But what we know now is that ever-present reigning King who said He would never leave us or forsake us.

In Hebrews chapter 12, I just call to mind a couple of verses, just let me read them to you. Verse 28: "Wherefore receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved," that's exciting, isn't it? What kind of a Kingdom do we have? One that can't be shaken. Listen: "Let us have grace by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire." If we havereceived a Kingdom that will never be moved, then it behooves us to serve God with reverence and godly fear. And so, Paul says Thank You ... Thank You, Father...Thank You for inheritance ... Thank You for deliverance...Thank You for transference.

And I would close by simply drawing you to verse 14 which sums it up. How was all of this possible? How was it that we could ever, ever receive an inheritance? That we could ever be delivered? That we could ever be transferred into His Kingdom? Only one way - we had to be redeemed and have our sins forgiven. The thing that stands between us and God is sin. Redemption is the forgiveness of sin and the drawing us to Himself. When God put Christ on the cross, and He bore your sin and He bore my sin, the penalty was paid and God had paid the price to redeem us back. And because of that, He could give us an inheritance, deliverance, transfer us into His Kingdom. This is a model prayer, as I said at the beginning. And I hope that you might get a couple of things out of this, dominantly ... one would be to thank God for what He's done, the epitome of what He's done in Christ. Two, to learn how to pray, to ask and to thank. Beloved, let me sum up this whole prayer from verses 9 to 14 in these words. When you look at see what God has done, when you acknowledge what He has done, when I do, how can we do less than be filled with the knowledge of His will? As Paul prays: "In all wisdom," verse9, "and spiritual understanding, that you might walk worthy of the

Lord unto all pleasing."

When we see what He has done, how can we do less?

Our Father, we thank You tonight for helping us to just focus on things we know so very well, things we've been over so many times, and yet maybe, Lord, see them in a different way. I've just dealt with Your Word tonight and purposely so and just really a Bible study, a very intense one, and yet I pray, Lord, that in my own inadequacies and frailties, the Spirit of God might take the Word of God and change lives that somehow bypassing the human element, You would accomplish something that would cause all heaven to rejoice. Save us from the mundane, to save us from the stupidity of getting lost in the things that don't matter and draw up out of our hearts the continual flow of praise for our inheritance, our deliverance, our transference into Your Kingdom. And then help us to walk worthy. We have been qualified positionally; help us to live that qualified life so that others may see in us our Kingdom. We pray in His name and for His glory. Amen.

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