

Are You God-Qualified?

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[0 : 00] Amen. Amen. Now, typically, when we come to this time where I'm going to exposit on the scripture of passage, I'll have my introduction, they're usually rather extended.

! That's okay, right? Yeah? Alright. Well, today, here's my introduction. There it is.

Are you God qualified? That's the introduction. Now, I hope that you're asking at this point, what in the world is that all about?

And that's exactly what an introduction is supposed to do. It's supposed to grab you, pull you in, make you want to sit up and say, let's hear what this is about. So, are you God qualified?

And it's in Colossians. Now, it's in a passage that is familiar to us. We've done some teaching on the passage I'll be preaching about in our Wednesday night studies. Some time ago, many years ago, I preached on this passage.

[1 : 16] And what I did was come back and tweak it over this week because it speaks to the theme that I want you to carry out of here with you today.

And hold on to, and for those of you who will be coming back for the Christmas Eve service, I'll be giving a small devotional, a brief devotional on this same theme as well.

So, I want you as our congregation to be thinking along these lines. Let's pick up in Colossians chapter 1. And I'll start in verse 9 and run through verse 14 to give you a bigger picture of some of the context that Paul is offering here as he opens this particular book.

This book of Colossians is one of the most, if not the most, Christocentric letters or books of the New Testament, if not the entire Bible.

Here is where Paul is putting Jesus front and center. And he is speaking throughout Colossians about the supremacy of Jesus in all things.

[2 : 22] So, this is a wonderful book to come to and really, really hammer home the wonderful supremacy of Jesus in life. In verse 9, Paul says, For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, that is, heard of their faith growing in Christ Jesus.

He says, We have not ceased to pray for you and to ask God for this, that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will and such in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Purpose in verse 10, So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. And that worthy walk looks like this. It's a walk to please Him in all respects or in all aspects of your life.

So that you will then bear spiritual fruit in every good work you perform. And you will go on increasing in that knowledge of God. This is the path of spiritual growth and walking with the Lord.

Verse 11 goes on to say, These benefits will include being strengthened with all power. That is, heavenly power for heavenly living. According to His glorious might.

[3 : 44] So this is a work of God in your life through the power of the Spirit. For the attaining of all steadfastness and patience. We need a steadfast, persevering and patient spirit with each other and even with ourselves as we grow in the Lord and deal with the issues of life.

He then goes on to say, Joyously, joyously giving thanks to the Father. To the Father. Why? Well, because He has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in, and here's the theme again, light.

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, the first question that we want to deal with is this issue of the Father. The Father. Who is the Father that is mentioned in verse 12?

Giving thanks to the Father. Well, in a general, as I say here on the screen, in a general sense, or in a broad sense, God is the Father of every human being.

[5 : 02] Just as Jesus, we read in John, is light and life enlightening every single human being on the planet. Look, people would know nothing.

Nothing. We would be brute beasts apart from the enlightening ministry of Jesus Christ on the human soul. We would be nothing more than animals if it weren't for that work of God in our life as human beings, made in the image of Almighty God.

So God, God is the maker of every human being, including you. He is the maker and creator of all that you and I see, all that we can know, and beyond.

Now, God knew that He would make you as you before He made the world. Now, please think about that and don't let that...

Please don't get used to hearing that. That God made you, you, and knew He would make you, you, before He ever made the world. You existed as you in God's mind.

[6 : 12] Does this start to help you get the bigness of God? Every human who's ever been born, that is the truth about them. And yet, we all start life in rebellion against that God, who knew us before He ever made the world.

God knit you then in your mother's womb. When it was the time for you to come into existence, by the will of Almighty God, He knit you, Psalm 139 tells us, in your mother's womb.

God determined the timing and the span of your life. God put you where you are, and He knows everything about you.

In fact, God knows more about you than you know about you, because God knows your heart, and you don't know your heart. You think you do, and you don't. The Bible tells us we do not know the depths of our hearts.

And so, over the course of your lifetime as a Christian, God will put you in situations where He squeezes you, and then stuff will come out. Then that comes out of your heart. And you'll go, ew.

[7 : 18] These are things that you may not have known, likely did not know, and He will show you, reveal them to you. And then what do you do? You bring those things to God in confession, you repent of those things, and then you replace those things with what pleases Him and honors Him.

How else would you know if God didn't squeeze it out of you? Look, if I wrote the script of my life, it would have looked a lot different from the time I got saved in college, as a college freshman.

If there was any pain at all, it would be brief and light and shallow. Right? You'd get over it real fast. There would be no disease in my life.

None of my people that I love and care about would suffer. Would you write it like that? You'd be tempted too, wouldn't you? I'm not the only one that wants ease and comfort.

And God does it a very different way because God is wise. Not Jeff, but the Lord. Now, regardless of your feelings, which we elevate to such a high status in life, regardless of your feelings about God and about life, regardless of what is happening in the world around you at any given time, God makes your own heart to beat.

[8 : 36] He makes your lungs to breathe, your body to function as it does. And God blesses you with life each and every day of your life. That is all God. God sustains, He gives, and He takes life.

But He does all of that by His goodness and wisdom. It just doesn't always feel good. But that does not change the goodness or nature of Almighty God.

We struggle with that because we want to be God with a little g. We want to be our own God. And so in those times that we are going through suffering and hardship, when there are times when we are being strained to the limit, when there's great doubt on the horizon or unknown on the horizon, we are tempted to run to illegitimate things to fill the gaps of what we want to be comfortable and to be assured.

And there's no greater assurance than running to God and living in His will and wisdom, even if it means the pain continues. I'm speaking right out of my life right now, so I'm not preaching at you as much as with you.

I'm living right there with you. God gives you material things to enjoy. He gives you babies to love. He gives you grandbabies to love.

[9 : 58] Right, Greg? Yes? Amen. He gives you children to raise, a family and friends to enjoy. And He does all of this for people who hate Him as well as people who love Him.

He gives you work. He brings you rain and sun and moon and seasons. He brings you sunsets and food. He brings you warmth.

He brings you the cool breeze. And He brings you a world full of wonder. Now I need to say this. God is not the trees.

God is not the sun. God is not the moon. And He's not the stars. God is not in the sunset. You cannot hear His voice in the wind.

He is not the animals. And God is not the earth. There is no such thing as Mother Nature. It is God the Father over all that He has made.

[11 : 04] But He is not the same as what He has made. He stands above it. God is Spirit. Now in this context that we've just read from the book of Colossians, Paul is saying that God is especially and spiritually the Father of those whom He has qualified to receive His very, very special inheritance.

It's an inheritance won by the sinless life and torturous death and glorious resurrection of His Son. So it's a big deal.

That is who Paul is referring to when he refers to us and saints in verse 12. Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Saints here in light simply refers to holy ones. You can write that in the margin of your Bible if you don't have a margin note there. For saints in light is literally rendered holy ones.

Holy ones. We are talking about those who are the beloved of God's heart and followers of His Son Jesus Christ. So these are Christians. We call these people Christians.

[12 : 31] They are those qualified by God to be with God. Hear it again. They are qualified by God, specially qualified by God to be with God.

I can go further and say to have God living in them. Now wait a minute. I just told you that God is bigger than all that He's made and that God is so big that He knew you and made you to be you in this particular time before He ever made the world.

How in the world then can that God come and live in this carcass? How can God come and live in a human being and be contained in this shell?

Well that's a wonderful question and it relates to the title. Are you God qualified? Because the answer to that question has everything to do with Jesus Christ coming to live in you and make you a new creature in Himself.

Isn't this a wonderful thing? Is it a mysterious thing? Is it a thing that makes your mind just start to just do this? You just begin to expand with the goodness and the glorious nature of God the Father.

[13 : 54] And you would not have me stand up here and preach God in a box, would you? So that I could make it a little more convenient for you to tote God around in terms of the God you want Him to be?

No, I preach the God who is in the Bible. And this is a big God. This is a wonderful God that condescends to save sinners like us and live in these bodies.

Now go figure. The baby in the manger did all this for us. He grew up and never committed a sin. He became a man.

And He went to this cross and He saved us. The word that is rendered qualified here, I'm going to put it up on the screen so you can see it in just a second.

The word qualified is a very interesting Greek word. And it is from a root that is hikano-o.

[14 : 57] Hikano-o. The actual Greek word here that's being used from that root is hikano-santai. Hikano-santai. Now, I love saying that word.

It's so interesting. It has the idea of to make fit. This root word has the idea of to make fit or to make sufficient.

To make prepared or to make adequate. And so you see where we get the English rendering of qualified, don't you? Now this is what it means for God to qualify you.

God has fitted you or us. He has equipped you in Jesus with all you need to gain the heavenly inheritance of a saint in light.

Capital L. Or literally, the holy ones as I mentioned before God. So by putting you in spiritual union with Jesus by grace through faith, God the Father made you sufficient.

[16 : 00] He made you. He qualified you as sufficient to live in holiness before Him. Now again, no small miracle. That God would be able to pull that off.

To take somebody in complete rebellion whose entire nature is defined by sinful rebellion and reverse that in such a way that He actually makes you a new creature in His Son.

And then goes for eternity seeing you in the same way He sees His Son. Holy before Him. You said, Jeff, wait a minute.

Did you say that God will for all eternity see me as He sees Jesus? Yes, because Jesus lives in you. It's the only way you can stand before a holy God.

Now you may say to me, now hear me say it, but Jeff, I don't feel like that all the time. I know you don't. You know why? Because you sin.

[17:01] Because you sin. And Jesus has made way for sinners to be made saints in light.

Saints in light. Holy ones in Him. Yeah, it means that you sin and it means that I sin and it means that we bring that sin before the Lord and confess it and then we repent of it.

We turn from it and we replace what that sin is. If it's gossip, we replace it with truth telling so that whenever we speak, we speak encouragement to people.

We don't spread tales, even if they're true, about other people to people because whenever we speak, we want to speak words that build up and edify.

Words of truth that offer love in Jesus Christ. Why? Because He has changed us into that person.

We are now reflecting the new nature of our character of our Lord.

[18:00] And that's why we change our speech. We change it because we're new people and we want to reflect that new personhood in Jesus, don't we? We approach problems in life with this new attitude and heart of wanting to please Jesus in that context.

So it takes and redefines the entire problem that we're facing in life. What is your hardship right now? What is the difficulty? Where does the doubt come from? What are you facing in life right now that's hard for you, that's taxing you, where you have uncertainty and all that kind of thing?

He takes this issue of Jesus living in me and He uses that to redefine that situation so that now I'm not defined by that problem. I don't have to be characterized by all the fear and doubt and uncertainty and anxiety that surrounds that problem because that problem is not greater than the grace of my God.

Now, now that situation is reconstituted in a context that says Jesus lives in me and God is using this trial to conform me to His image. I can either lean into that or I can fight it.

Those are our choices. One leads to life and one leads to more problem. You can compound your problem. When you're problem-centered, you're problem-defined.

[19:24] When you're Jesus-centered, you're Jesus-defined. Is that simple enough? This is what we need, huh? We need the simplicity of the truth of God to penetrate deep into this and help to reconstitute the context of how we live on this planet.

This is what He does. Now, we need to take special note that the people I'm talking about labeled Christians, true believers, those who are looking to Jesus Christ by grace through faith to be saved in the Lord, to be born again in His forgiveness, we need to take note that these are what I'm going to call extraordinary, ordinary people.

What do I mean? They are ordinary in the sense they're like you and they're like me. They love, hear me now, they love, they dream, they have to eat, they have to sleep, they play, they marry, they grieve.

They laugh and live and die in the everyday ebb and flow of what this life is on this planet, but they also stand apart as extraordinary because God has done something for them and in them and that something has changed the way they love.

It's changed the way they dream, the way they eat, sleep, play, marry, grieve, laugh, live and die as each day comes and each day goes.

[21:01] If you look over at Colossians 3, verse 17, I can show you one verse of many that speaks to this change that Jesus brings into the everyday of our lives and it goes down to the most mundane of things.

Look at verse 17 of chapter 3. Whatever you do in both word or deed, that covers every aspect of your life, how are you to do it? Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

That is, do all according to His will. It's another way that we say it around here at Grace, make it about Jesus. So it can read this way. Whatever you do in word or deed, make it about Jesus.

Giving thanks through Him to God the Father. So this is a person living in thankfulness to God. For Christians then, for Christians, a sunset.

We don't look at the sunset and say, that's God and bow down to the sunset and worship the sunset, do we? Now, if you're like me, you may have seen some sunsets that brought tears to your

eyes and filled your heart with joy.

[22 : 13] But I hope what came out of your mouth next was, thank you God for making something so beautiful and giving me the eyes to see it and the heart to appreciate it for what it is.

Your creation because you're God. Right? We see that. We take a walk in the woods or in the park or in a beautiful place and perhaps we're moved with what we're seeing and it moves our hearts to thank our Creator.

We might rejoice at the laughter of a loved one. You know, I told Suzanne the other day as we were reflecting on our life together and the things that had been happening and just trying to talk about it in the Lord and take stock together.

We're really trying to squeeze out every lesson that we can from this trial because it's quite unlike any others we've spent in 40 years in terms of her health.

I remember saying to her, you know, hon, if the Lord were to take you and somebody was to ask me what do you miss most about having a relationship with a woman that you spent more than four decades with, I know exactly what I would say right away.

[23 : 35] The very first thing I would say I miss her laugh. I like making my wife laugh and I will do some of the most stupid, idiotic things and I will not tell you what they are and she better not either but you would say Jeff does that.

She would tell you he'll do anything to make me laugh. I love her laugh and I would miss that. Look, the laughter of a loved one can be a beautiful and wonderful thing in Christ, in the Lord.

Another of the many experiences from everyday life, whatever they are, are seen as blessings from a good God and might bring tears of joyful gratitude or even maybe silence of inexpressible awe and wonder where we can just stand there and just think about God and we don't have words.

Our hearts just full. Greg mentioned this this morning. Pastor Greg said that about his heart for you. Almost inexpressible the joy he has as a shepherd of your souls.

It's just a wonderful thing to serve God and to have God lead us in a deeper worship and praise of Him that has little to do with sentimentality or hyping you up or anything like that.

[24 : 55] It's not smoke and mirrors. It's just bringing before you the God of the Bible and helping you see Him for who He is or how He's revealed Himself to us. Now, for these extraordinary, ordinary people, these are moments for them to be still and know that I am God.

Oh boy, does our world need to hear that message. Be still and know that I am God. Now, all of this that I'm saying is being couched under this first item that I wanted to use as a talking point, the Father.

Everything I'm saying to you now, I'm saying based on what I understand the Bible to teach about the Father. Every bit of it. This is what it means for us to serve the Father.

You know, He gets a bad rap sometimes. Even from us when we're in pain, when we're suffering, when things aren't going right. You'll hear expressions about I'm angry at God.

And I want to let you know with all tenderness in my heart that being angry at God is sin. None of us have any reason whatsoever to be angry at perfection. Nothing.

[26 : 06] Nothing. No, God is loving toward us. And He never does anything that would warrant righteous anger against Him.

For us to have righteous anger against God would put God in the position of being unrighteous. So we want to be very careful there. I understand what that means when we say it, but I'm saying it's wrong.

It reveals more about our heart than it does about God and anything that He might be doing in our lives. We hear people talk about being disappointed in the Lord or other things like that.

But we all know that God is not the problem. So as beautiful and powerful and life-defining as this reality is regarding the Father, it hasn't always been this way because, listen now, for every Christian, there is a life before being a Christian.

Yes? For me? For you? So, look, I'm going to put it up here on the screen again. The fact that you have to be qualified means that at one time you were disqualified.

[27 : 15] That is true of every single one of us. So, think of these words applied to you as I put them up here on the screen. Here they are. Unfit. Unfit.

Ineligible. Banned. Excluded. Separated. Insufficient. Or unentitled. Alright? Now, that was your nature in relationship to God before Jesus.

And that's true, yes? We all accept this. Romans, we go here often to see this. Romans chapter 1 beginning in verse 18 where we have a description of at least the heart and nature of every single person including you before you were born again.

For the wrath, the holy anger of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth and unrighteousness.

Did you know that about you? Before you were saved, you suppressed God's truth about Christ and about His love for you in Christ.

[28 : 24] You suppressed all of that in an unrighteous heart. Because, verse 19, that which is known about God is evident within them for God made it evident to them.

How did He do that? How is it that every single person knows that there is a God in the heavens? For since the creation of the world, God's invisible attributes, what invisible attributes?

His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen. How have we seen God's eternal power and divine nature? Well, they're understood through what has been made.

So that every single person who suppresses the truth and unrighteousness is without excuse. For even though they knew God, they didn't honor Him as God or give thanks to Him.

No, they gave thanks to the moon God. They gave thanks to the sunset God. They gave thanks to the trees and the mountains and the rivers. But they became futile in that and their foolish heart was darkened.

[29 : 25] There is that concept again of light and dark. Professing to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for images.

Images in the form of corruptible man and birds and animals and crawling creatures and therefore, because of this, God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts.

There is the issue. He places the issue of idolatry right at the place where it is the center of our being, our heart. He gave them over in their hearts to impurity, to idol worship.

So that their bodies would be dishonored among them. And He did this because they exchanged the truth of God for a lie. They worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever.

Amen. And so that is the reality for every single one of us. There was a time these people and for every Christian when none of the beautiful and blessed things of life made us think about or show joy and gratitude to Almighty God, our Maker.

[30 : 38] Now in fact, by nature, you and I begin and go through life not caring in the least about God, but actually, as I've said, denying Him. We live for ourselves. We resent God's intrusion into our lives.

We rebel against God. And we withhold our thanks and praise for what God has blessed us with each day. Boy, that just sounds like a bunch of brats, doesn't it? And spiritual brats we are.

Without Jesus Christ, we have no hope. No hope. Now isn't it true that at some point in time, you and both myself and you, we have lived or you are now living as though God just really doesn't matter?

as if you have so many better things to do than to be bothered with all this God stuff. Well, God calls that rebellion. In this reality of sinful rebellion, the fact that we would rather do our own thing rather than do God's thing is what Paul is referring to as the domain of darkness in verse 13.

The domain of darkness. I told you just a moment ago when it comes to this idea of rebellion in our hearts. It's something that is endemic to human beings.

[31 : 58] It's something that is part of our nature and all of us suffer with it so that you are tempted even as a Christian to say this. Hear me now. Listen to how I say this.

If I were God for a day, I wouldn't write today like this. This chapter of my life would look really different if I could grab the pen and write it.

Have you ever had that? Because I don't like this. And I don't want this. And we need to be careful, don't we?

Because if I'm rightly describing the Father, then the Father is not removed from whatever is happening in your life. He's the author of it.

Now, not the author of sin, but the author of all that's coming into your life in the way of the timing and the trial, even the severity, the intensity of the trial.

[33 : 00] You can lay at the feet of the Lord. Now, I don't know what that does to your theology, but that is biblical theology. And so, now you're faced with a question.

Is God good in that or not? And you need to be careful what you do with your feelings at that moment. Because if it doesn't feel good, we often equate it with God isn't good. And that is not biblically true. That is a bad, bad street to go down. It's very dark. It will take you to a very bad place where there is no light.

Back to this domain of darkness as we see it in chapter 1 verse 13. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness.

Now, I want you to see that the He here, the pronoun He, refers back to the antecedent in verse 12, which is the Father.

[34 : 05] The antecedent for He is the Father. The Father qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light, for He rescued us from the domain of darkness.

This domain of darkness described in the life of disqualified people can also be seen in Romans 5, or 8, 5-8.

Romans, if you would go there again with me, this time to chapter 5, I just want to give you some illustration of all of this.

Romans 8, beginning in verse 5, for those who are according to the flesh, now here is where we are reading about unbelievers.

This was you and I before Christ. Those who are according to the flesh, set their minds on the things of the flesh. So, unbelievers are full of themselves.

[35 : 04] But those who are according to the Holy Spirit, now the Spirit has come to live in you and given you the new nature of the Lord Jesus. The things of the Spirit then start to define you.

For the mind set on the flesh is death. That's the dead end that I told you about. It's a bad street to go down. But the mind set on the Holy Spirit is what?

Life and peace. Because the mind set on the flesh, the unbelieving mind, is hostile toward God. For it does not subject or submit itself to the law of God, to the moral code of God.

For it is not even able to do so. And those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Folks, if you cannot please God, you cannot share heaven with God.

And so something has to change. And it has to be dramatic because it's a change in your nature.

One other place I want to take you is right here next to Colossians.

[36 : 07] If you turn back a couple of books to Ephesians chapter 4 beginning in verse 17, you get another description of what it's like to live apart from God in unbelief.

So this I say and affirm together with the Lord that you walk no longer as an unbeliever or as the Gentiles. That is in the futility of their own minds.

Futility here has the idea of emptiness. In the emptiness of their own minds. Being, here it is again, darkened, darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their heart.

And they having become spiritually callous have given themselves over to sensuality. That is selfish pleasure. Anything that involves selfish pleasure for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

So that is a description of what it means for you to live as an unbelieving rebellious person against the Lord. Now listen, folks, please, God's children learn to live differently than this.

[37 : 29] The difference is what God has done. That's the difference. You ask, well, Jeff, what did God do? Again, look at the text with me. God qualified them.

We are giving thanks in verse 12 to God the Father who has qualified us. He has done this work in us. And that work causes us to share in a heavenly inheritance as holy ones.

God has made us holy in Jesus Christ. It's the only way. It's a supernatural change in nature. And so God qualified us to inherit this very, very special thing that only He can give and it belongs to God.

He gives it to those who come to believe in Him by faith, to learn to love Him, to learn to belong to Him. One of the things that we can say about characterizing the Christian life is this, you will spend the rest of your life learning to belong to Jesus.

What does it look like for me to belong to Jesus? To have Him as my authority, to have Him defining every aspect of my life so that whatever is going on in my life at any given moment, I am allowing Jesus to define it for me.

[38 : 50] I am looking to Jesus to help me walk through it, making it about Him. I am learning to belong to my Father. Solomon, can you grab your wife's hand, Kendall, and say with her, honey,

follow me as I learn to belong to Jesus.

See, that's my challenge too, brother. As a husband, as a dad, we look at our families and we say to our families, as I learn to belong to Jesus, will you join me in that adventure?

And an adventure it is. I can tell you this, it ain't boring. You may not like it at times, but it ain't boring.

It's the greatest adventure on this planet. It's to live a life learning to belong to Jesus. It's learning to be who you are in him. And it is marvelous.

The most wonderful thing about all of this that I'm saying about the Father is that God the Father is still taking ordinary people like you, like your friends, like your family, and many others, and making them extraordinary by qualifying them to inherit the same special heavenly gift.

[40 : 10] His name is Jesus. Now, here we go for the second talking point, the Father's qualified children. The Father's qualified children.

Those God is qualified, He's adopted. Now, Paul doesn't mention adoption by name, but he speaks here of an inheritance, and I'm still building on that.

So what we need to realize is that only God's children can inherit from God. You have to be in God's spiritual family in order to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

God leaves everything He owns to His kids. They get it all, and they all get it all. It's just amazing.

What is this inheritance which God has shared with His children?

What is it? Well, here it is. I've said it several times. It's everything God is, hear me, everything God Himself is and owns. You get it all. You get Him, and you get all that He has.

[41 : 14] All of the riches of His favor, His person, His love, all the wealth of His entire kingdom comes to you as His child. In other words, it's a way of saying God withholds nothing from you.

But that's not how we feel when we're suffering. We accuse Him of holding out on us, don't we? I'm not being lighthearted about this.

I'm saying this is what we do. We can get to the place where we feel like God is holding out on us. God isn't giving us what we're asking for, what we desire.

He's not giving this in a way that I would write it out and script it for my own life. And so what that brings us to in those moments is maybe God in this isn't being good after all because I'm getting left behind in the process of life.

All right, I rarely do this, but I'm going to do it today. And I'll start with what I just said. If you have ever been in a place in your life where you have felt like that or had thoughts similar to that, would you mind raising your hand and I'll be the first one to raise mine.

[42 : 26] I'm not surprised that all of us are going to raise our hands and say, if I've lived long enough on this life as a Christian, I have wrestled with thoughts like that when the pain or the situation has been very, very hard.

That's the temptation of the darkness. Your heart and your enemy want to take you down a street that isn't lit with the light of God's love.

That's where He wants you. That street is called the unknown. It's called the uncertain. the street of pain is not dark.

It's lit as a Christian because we never suffer without purpose in Jesus. So when you walk down the street of pain and suffering, it is lit by the light of God's love in Christ for you.

Now you may not see all the issues that are going on, but that doesn't mean that it's not lit with the love of the Lord. And you can endure it in the Lord. Beloved, this is one of the great blessings of God bringing us from darkness to light so that we can live in that light.

[43 : 44] Jesus Christ is this treasure. He is the treasure of God's love now living in you by faith. And God the Holy Spirit living in you is God's deposit.

The Holy Spirit living in you is God's proof. It's His guarantee of your inheritance of heaven itself. So that there's no other explanation for your life and the life that you live in Christ.

The Holy Spirit lives in you and the Holy Spirit then is the proof of God's deposit that He will bring you to heaven as He's promised. And that's the change that you and I live in the Lord.

God qualifies us to share in and to take possession of our spiritual inheritance by spiritually adopting us into His family.

Once again I'm wearing out Romans. If you'll go to Romans chapter 8 again I'll share this with you very quickly and then move on to these final thoughts. Romans 8 and I'll pick it up in verse 14 where Paul is speaking about this idea of adoption, this reality of adoption.

[44 : 58] For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are what? Sons of God. And ladies, daughters of God. For you have not received the spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received the spirit of adoption.

adoption as sons by which now we are able to cry out, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are indeed children of God.

And if children, heirs, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

Now you see in that that those of us who are in Jesus Christ are going to suffer the suffering of Jesus. We're going to know what it's like to feel the pressure of swimming upstream as Christians in a world that hates the Lord.

So Peter tells us, don't be surprised. Don't let yourself be shocked by the reality that swimming upstream in this world means you're going to get hit with stuff.

[46 : 11] Swimming upstream, a log's going to come down and bonk right in the old brain. You're going to be swimming upstream and you know, rocks. You're going to have to jump over stuff.

You can't go, you go with the current, you start going the wrong way. This is what it looks like to live and to love. But this is part of what it means to be adopted into the kingdom of Almighty God.

The third thing I want to tell you has to do with the Father's delivered children. Again, in verse 13, he rescued us from the domain of darkness. He transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son.

Now, I've gone over this with you before in great detail for those of you who come on Wednesday night, so you might remember this. He has delivered us or rescued us from the domain of darkness and he has transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son.

Darkness and light are contrasted because, as I say on the screen, darkness symbolizes the sin and rebellion, the bondage, wickedness, death. Light, however, symbolizes purity and salvation, freedom, life.

[47 : 24] The darkness of your sin hides the truth from you and it will keep you stumbling through life. And that is why I counsel you and preach to you and say, don't run to the darkness.

darkness. Don't run to the unknown. Don't run to your doubt. Don't cave to your fear. Those are places that aren't lit with the wisdom of God.

Run to God's wisdom. Run to faith. Now, it's sad and it's tragic what you and I will use in our efforts to throw some kind of light, artificial light, hear me now, artificial light on our darkened lives and then get us through life.

You could make a list. I won't do that. We all could make a list. Whatever it is that we run to, we try and make our own light with so many things in this life in a continually failing attempt to try and stave off the fear, to stave off the anxiety, the emptiness that grips us.

And here's the reality. This is what I want to share with you. Here is the reality of why every human being on the planet grows up and does what I just described in life.

[48 : 47] Here it is. I'm going to put it up on the screen. It's because we are all afraid of the dark. We hate the dark.

We fear the dark and yet we run to it. you say, Jeff, that's insane. Well, sin is insane, brothers and sisters.

We are all afraid of the dark, but we try to hide it from ourselves. We try to hide it from others only to find out that they're just as afraid of the dark as we are. We're all afraid of what we really are and we don't want anyone to know what we know about ourselves.

So we wear the mask, we put up the facade, and we play hypocrisy. The sins, this is all something that we're constantly tempted toward.

The sins and apathy, folks, the clutter and the busyness, the distractions, the denials, even the anger and depression, the doubts, the scoffing, the rebellion and lies that we tell ourselves.

[49 : 59] These are all like nose rings that Satan uses to lead us around in his dark dominion on this earth.

A nose ring is something that farmers and veterinarians and different people will use and they can put it in that meaty part of an animal's nose.

We used to do this with bulls on our farm and we could hook to that and that tender part, you know, you wouldn't have to give much pressure and they respond because it hurts.

All this stuff that I just said that we run to for artificial light, it's like Satan putting a nose ring in you and leading you around with it. Listen, if somebody asks, what is the darkest place on planet earth?

Do you know what you'd say? Where is the darkest place on planet earth? I would say this, I'd say it's the human heart. The darkest place on the planet is the human heart.

[51 : 04] You don't have to look far. And we've all felt this darkness in our souls. Spiritual darkness is blindness and we don't like it. And yet, so we need God to qualify us.

We need God to rescue us, to deliver us, to transfer. This is a work God has to do. Or we'll just let Satan lead us around by the nose. We need God to bring His light to our darkened souls.

And God's light is the way for you to be lovingly led by God, brought out of the hiding that your soul wants to do.

God's wisdom and truth show you what you need to see, what you need to hear. in order to be delivered and forgiven.

So it's no wonder that Paul asked God to please continue to help us know God in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. It's God's truth, His gospel good news that Jesus is the light of life.

[52 : 10] He's our treasure and He's our only weapon against darkness, blindness, deception, sin. Jesus. Not religion. Jesus. Jesus. The fathers transferred children.

These are those whom God has transferred because He has transformed them. Again, you see this in the text. He has transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.

Folks, this is very straightforward. Transferred means simply to relocate. So God spiritually relocated you from Satan's domain of darkness into Jesus' domain or His kingdom.

So God's beloved Son shares and makes available His Father's same saving love for us. The same resurrection power that brought Jesus out of the grave to give Him new life out of death, that is what animates you.

You are living testimonies of the power of God to take a soul from death to life. You live that every day. Do you?

[53 : 23] Do you live that every day? I don't live it very perfectly. Sometimes there is a lot of shade on that light so that it is kind of dark.

Yeah. You are not in heaven yet are you? This is why we need each other. This is why we need each other. God the Father comes and takes us out of this bondage.

He takes us out of the dark dungeon of Satan's domain. He doesn't just then leave us in some limbo of life to fend for ourselves. Oh, I got you out of that.

Do your best. No. No. Life beats on us. Listen. Life beats on us because this life is anti-heaven.

You're a stranger here because this is no longer your home. You're a sojourner. God's rescue efforts didn't leave you just wandering around trying to figure out what to do with your newfound freedom.

[54 : 28] No. God rescued us and then took us and put us or relocated us into his kingdom. That is the kingdom where his son rules works in love and in light.

That's what he did. God makes us one of his children. He makes us subject to his fatherly rule in our lives. Now I want to ask you a question because people get hung up here.

I'm moving toward a close. Listen. What is the purpose of this fatherly authority over our lives?

Have you dealt with that? Have you thought about this? What is the purpose of this fatherly authority over our lives?

So that everything Jesus inherits, we inherit. If God is not your authority, you don't inherit anything from heaven.

Nothing. You get something far worse. Now please hear your pastor here. Life can bring us to think of this fatherly authority that we're describing as something distant, something arbitrary, something punishing, cold, or even cruel.

[55 : 41] We can think God's being mean to me right now. We can think God's forgotten me. God shelved me. God's kind of left me behind right now.

That's what life can do. But we think like that because of the deceitfulness of sin at work in our hearts, not because it's true of God.

God does not work like that with His children. God's authority is that of a loving Father who gave up His greatest treasure to guarantee that we would share in it.

And that is the person of Jesus. That's where the text takes us in verse 14. Notice, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

This is the beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin. In whom is the location of these fatherly blessings so that in Jesus, God's own Son, you can be qualified to inherit

all that God is and owns.

[56 : 49] In Jesus, you can be delivered from the dark domain of self, from a wasted life, from apathy, deception, emptiness, rebellion. All the things we're scared of, we run from, and yet we run to, because we get desperate.

In Jesus, you can be transferred to the realm and reign of God as your spiritual father. And you can live in that lavish love. You can live and know that goodness.

But life and your enemy will tell you that what you need most is personal happiness. And that happiness can only be found in a sense of your own worth.

The only way you and I can know any degree of happiness on this planet is to come to the place where we believe that we matter. I would say it this way, that we matter most.

But God knows what you really need, folks. He knows the true value that He's placed on your soul because He made your soul. Don't listen to the world. Don't listen to your own heart.

[57 : 57] And certainly don't listen to Satan as he lies to you. I'll put it up here on the screen. Your greatest need is God's forgiveness, not personal happiness.

In Jesus, you can be freed and forgiven, forgiven so completely and finally that you become a new person with a new family, a new life and a new future.

Now look, redemption in this text means this. I want to spell it out for you. Redemption refers to the purchased ones. That's what it means. When the text tells us that in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, this is what it's talking about.

Purchased by whom, Jeff? The Father. Who did He purchase? Sinners. When? On the cross. So those in bondage to sin are freed from sin's penalty by the ransom price of Jesus' own life.

This is what we just celebrated in the table. That He gave His life to ransom us from sin. To pay the price necessary for us to be purchased away from sin and death.

[59 : 04] And the only price that could be paid was the price of His perfect sinless life. So Jesus used His own life to ransom you. Now folks, look, God's forgiveness in Jesus is not a gimmick.

It's not a gimmick. We don't have to dress it up. We don't have to hide it in something else. We don't have to wrap it up in something that's more beautiful because I don't know what that would be, but we do it.

We try to do it. Life in Christ is not a gimmick. The forgiveness of God is not a gimmick. We just need to put it out there for what it is. Will people hate it?

Yes. I've actually had people don't tell me I need to be forgiven. Forgiven for what? I had someone very close to me tell me, stop saying to me that I am a person in bondage.

Stop telling me that. No, I'm not. They hate that. People don't appreciate it when we tell them that they're sinners.

[60 : 16] You think? But we can do that with great love in our heart. Because God's forgiveness makes for a new way of life.

And the only way is for us to understand that we are that sinner in need of that forgiveness. New life in Jesus keeps you in the unassailable love of God no matter what life throws at you.

I'm going to say that again because I'm afraid it could go right past you. I know it's late. Listen.

Jesus keeps you in the unassailable love of God no matter what life throws at you.

If I didn't have that to hang on to, I'd have lost my mind over the last two months. God knows and I confess to you, there's nothing that pushes my buttons harder than watching my wife suffer.

Nothing. And Satan knows that, don't you think? I want to share a couple of quotes with you in terms of this forgiveness.

[61 : 25] The first one that I want to share with you as I close is from John MacArthur. If anybody asks you what is the distinguishing mark of Christian doctrine or Christian theology, what is the heart and soul of the gospel, it is the forgiveness of sins.

that's it. That our sins can be and are by faith in Jesus Christ forgiven and we therefore enter into a relationship with God that has no guilt, no culpability and that's why we are allowed to fellowship with Him and enter into His eternal heaven.

Our sins are forgiven. Period. Jerry Bridges has written this and it parallels what MacArthur said. A clear understanding and appropriation of the gospel which gives freedom from sin's guilt and sin's grip is in the hands of the Holy Spirit a chief means of spiritual growth.

Nothing, nothing motivates us to want to grow as does the understanding and application of the two truths that our sins are forgiven and the dominion of sin is broken because of our union with Jesus.

Paul said in whom in Jesus Christ we have redemption freedom and forgiveness. So Christian listen stop letting Satan lead you around by a nose ring.

[62 : 55] If you trust in the Lord Jesus to forgive you of your sins and make you right with God then you are an adopted child of heaven. Heaven is your new home and you already share in the family fortune.

You're just waiting for that moment to arrive. believe it and live like it. The final quote that I'll offer you is from a 17th century Anglican priest and poet.

His name is George Herbert and this is what he wrote. Thou that has given so much to me give one more thing a grateful heart.

Not thankful when it pleases me as if thy blessings had some spare days but such a heart whose pulse may be thy praise.

That is good. Will you join me in prayer? Amen. dear father as your people settle their hearts now in what they have heard as they have labored to heed to understand to appropriate much has been said and brought to them and I pray that you'll help them to sort it out for today so that they are able to make application of at least a portion of this truth and be equipped and be built up in their faith so that they can meet their adversary the devil with faith looking to the light dispelling the darkness moving moving away from doubt and fear and uncertainty into the marvelous light of what you've promised and who you are help us to stay there and as we see our brothers and sisters slipping and trying to grip these truths in their fight against sin and death

[65 : 15] I pray that you would help us to rally to them willingly lovingly kindly with great patience and understanding and be willing to endure the mess with them for as long as needed help us to be a church that makes it about Jesus keeps it about Jesus to bring greater glory to you in all things in Jesus name we pray amen