

Qualified
September 30, 2018

We are going to learn a great truth this morning. For many of you it is not new. But it may be a new way of looking at your salvation than you have seen before.

For others, this truth may be altogether new. You are still unsure of your relationship with God. You are still unsure of all this talk of salvation in Jesus by faith alone. You may be thinking there is still something you need to do in addition to what Jesus did, that will make it possible for you to enter heaven. I pray for you to understand what is available to you in Jesus.

We are in a series of sermons on the letter of Colossians, in the New Testament part of the Bible. This is in contrast to the Old Testament. The word testament means covenant. As far as we know, Yahweh, the God of the Bible was not in a covenant relationship with any of the people groups on earth for many years. Then, at one point, God initiated a relationship with a man named Abram, and later, God initiated a covenant with Abrams's descendents. These were the Israelites.

The Israelites, as a group, for the most part, failed to keep their end of the covenant. So, through the prophet Jeremiah, God foretold of a time when He would create a new covenant with Israel, a much better covenant than the old one. This is the covenant relationship that we can have with God. It is based, not on our obedience to God, but rather on the obedience of Jesus to God.

In the first covenant, the people related to God through the Law of Moses. In the new covenant, the people, us, relate to God by the Holy Spirit. We are not living under the Law of Moses. We are living by the Spirit of God Himself, who has come to reside in each Christian.

In the passage of Colossians that we are examining this morning we will focus on three key words.

Colossians 1:12-14 (NIV) {God} the Father... has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The first word is Inheritance. (Matthew 25:34; Acts 20:32; Ephesians 1:14; Colossians 3:24; Hebrews 9:15; 1 Peter 1:4)

Did you know that as a Christian you have an inheritance? **All Christians will share in an inheritance with Christ Jesus.** We see this in several passages, but let's look at the one in Romans 8. Immediately preceding this verse, Paul has written of Christians being adopted by God into God's family. We are therefore no longer just creations of God, but His children. And as his children we are given an inheritance.

Romans 8:17 (NIV) Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

We are heirs with Jesus of several things. Glory is one of these. God, the son had glory in heaven before he came to earth as the God/Man. We know this because he says so. In John 17 Jesus prays about many subjects and asks for several things. Let's look at one of the things he asks for.

John 17:5 (NIV) And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

After his death and resurrection, Jesus once more was in his glory. He received glory from the Father and the Holy Spirit. He received glory from the angels and other heavenly beings. Then he received glory from his disciples. And now He is receiving glory from us as we worship Him and obey Him. And after we come in to our inheritance we will give Him even more glory.

But he is still missing some of his glory. There are a lot of people through history who have not known Jesus as the Son of God. One day they will learn the truth, which will give Jesus glory. And when Jesus returns to the earth every person alive then will see him and know who and what he is. Then he will receive glory like he never has before.

And we will receive glory with him. Look with me at 1 Peter 1.

1 Peter 1:7 (NIV) These (trials) have come so that your faith...may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Near the conclusion of His parable of the talents, Jesus told the disciples that when the master returns to his servants who have been doing his will he will say to them, "Well done, good and faithful servant." When Jesus returns we who serve him will receive glory from him and with him as we are recognized as his followers.

Our hope is for Jesus to receive all the glory due Him when everyone learns who he is. And our hope includes the fact that we will receive glory with him when he returns. All those people who now think us crazy for believing in Jesus will then know that we are serving the Lord of the universe who was raised from the dead.

This glory is part of the inheritance we will receive with Jesus.

But how did we become heirs with Jesus?

God has granted us the privilege of qualification to share in this inheritance.

Qualified = to make sufficient, to make adequate, to enable, to make able, to make fit for, to make enough, to make competent

You see the range of meanings and nuances of this Greek word. But the basic point is that we are given this. It is not something we earn for ourselves. Instead it is something someone else has done.

We did not earn qualification to this inheritance. Instead, God has give us declared us to have this qualification.

But how has God done this? He did not make us sufficient to earn salvation. He did not make us adequate to avoid deserving of hell. Instead he credited us with the qualification of privilege. Though we don't deserve this inheritance, God granted us this privilege because of Jesus.

The basis for our inheritance is what Jesus did, not what we did. God has said we can have this inheritance if we believe on Jesus. And we did. We believe that Jesus earned this inheritance and as His followers we are qualified by God to inherit with Jesus.

We are taking God at His word. This is the faith God is looking for from us. Faith is trusting that what God says. This is exactly what God has always done for those who believe in Him and trust His promises. Abraham is the model for us in this.

The following passage uses pronouns for two separate persons so I have inserted who the pronouns represent.

Genesis 15:5-6 (NIV) He (God/Yahweh) took him (Abram) outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he (God) said to him (Abram), "So shall your offspring be." Abram believed the LORD (Yahweh), and he (God/Yahweh) credited it to him (Abram) as righteousness.

Abram was not righteous with God through a perfect life of obedience to God. But when God made a promise to Abram and Abram believed God, then God credited Abram with the same righteousness or right relationship he would have had, had he lived a perfect life of obedience to God.

Our experience is similar in that God has presented his promises to us of forgiveness and eternal life in the death and resurrection of Jesus. And by our faith in God's promise and in the death and resurrection of Jesus, God credits us with righteousness.

We KNOW that our experience of salvation is on the same basis as Abram being credited with righteousness by God because Paul wrote of this in Romans 4.

Romans 4:21-24 (NIV) (Abram was) fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

Indeed, that is what has occurred for those who have put their faith in Jesus' death and resurrection for the forgiveness of their sins. They have been credited with righteousness. This means they have been declared by God to have a right relationship, an acceptable relationship, with God. This is not a righteousness they have earned or worked for. It is a gift from God.

We have put our faith in Christ Jesus and God credited us with righteousness just as he did Abram. This is how God qualified us to the inheritance that is ours with Jesus.

Dominion = rule or power to rule, sovereign authority,

As followers of Jesus, we have become citizens of His kingdom. God has rescued us from another kingdom so we could become citizens of Christ's kingdom. Christ's kingdom is described as a kingdom of light. This is in contrast with the other one, the kingdom or dominion of darkness.

Light and darkness are used in the Bible as metaphors for good and bad, truth and falsehood.

All people who are not Christians are currently living in the dominion of darkness. They are living as slaves to sin, under a sentence of death and hell. The Bible is clear that there is a person who is in authority over this kingdom. There is a person who has power over this dominion of darkness. Note that I am using the word person not for a human, but for a spiritual being. The angels are not humans, but each is a spiritual being. Each is a spiritual person, with a will of their own. There is a person who has authority over this dominion of darkness.

An office manager was complaining in their staff meeting that he wasn't getting any respect. The next day, he attached a small sign to his office door: I'm The Boss! Later that day, he returned from lunch to find that somebody had taken note over his sign. It read, "Your wife called. She wants her sign back."

So who is the leader of this dominion of darkness? It is none other than Satan.

God has granted some rebellious angels to have some authority over the earth, even while God is still sovereign over all. This is similar to what we see in some countries today. In some countries of the world, the constitution guarantees every citizen freedom of religion. But in practice local government leaders do not always enforce or allow this freedom. The local governor has dominion over an area of the country. He has control, power, for good or ill.

God is sovereign over the whole world. But, for a time, forces of evil have freedom to do their mischief. And these are the enemies of Christians, as Paul writes of in the letter to the Ephesus church.

Ephesians 6:12 (NIV) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

(Acts 26:17-18; Ephesians 2:1-2)

While the world belongs to God, the devil and his followers have been allowed to dominate the world. Yet even in that God has them under constraint. They cannot do all they would like to do. Time and time again God frustrates their plans, bringing good out of evil.

God, in his wisdom and patience, is putting up with the devil for a time. So since the forces of evil have been given a free hand to an extent, this world is labeled as their dominion. As such it is a place where the spiritually enslaved have no hope.

There are many people enslaved illegally today. Some are enslaved as children. Imagine what existence is like for them. They have no education, no knowledge of the outside world, no hope of escape, no hope of any better life. Such a person knows the reality of the dominion of darkness.

Some of us were living so deep in sin that we had no hope of escaping the dominion of darkness. But someone brought to us the light of the good news. We recognized that God was promising us something better. We put our faith in God, in Jesus, and we were rescued from the dominion of darkness. God has rescued us from where we were. We are now looking forward to our inheritance with Jesus.

This is why we gather together on Sundays. We don't gather to earn our freedom. We don't gather in hopes of winning our freedom. Instead, we have already been qualified by God with freedom in Christ. We gather to celebrate the freedom we already have.

Jesus invites you to this inheritance today. He will qualify you too into the inheritance of those who have trusted in Jesus if you will but trust His promise of forgiveness and eternal life.