



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

It's a Wonderful Life

Preeminent. Christ's Place in the World | Part 3

Travis Fleming | December 14, 2014 | Colossians 1:3-9-14



We are in our series called, "Preeminent," which means that we want to see Christ given first place in our lives. I know that sometimes during a holiday season we get busy. We can forget the reason for the season. This is the Christmas season, the time to reflect and celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a time of faith. It's a time of family. It's a time of fellowship. It is a time when we nestle into our homes, surrounded by decorations and Christmas lights with presents under the tree and the smell of evergreen in the air. When it is grey and cold outside we nestle down on the couch, turn on the TV and watch one of the old Christmas movies.

You might come across "It's a Wonderful Life" starring Jimmy Stewart. It was released Christmas Day in 1946. It was done in black and white. Those of you born post 2000 have no clue what I'm talking about. There used to be movies in black and white; they talked in them and they actually lived. But this movie is about a man named George Bailey who lives in Bedford Falls and is a small business owner. It's the night before Christmas and an employee of his ends up losing a deposit that they really need and as a result they end up defaulting on their bank loan. Because of this, and a cover up by his enemy, George's business is going into bankruptcy. The whole town is going to fall apart. He despairs of life itself. Everyone is pressing in on him and he wishes that he had never been born. He's contemplating suicide.

As that happens, an angel by the name of Clarence appears to him. He's there because he hasn't gotten his wings yet. Clarence begins to show George what life would have been like had he not been born. Clarence shows George that this town would have gone into complete anarchy, immorality and gross sin. Clarence shows him that his life really does matter. He was affecting people and helping transform lives.

So our sermon title today is, "It's a Wonderful Life." Though life is bad around us, we really do have a wonderful life. When I think about that movie and the life that we have in Christ, I see a connection. Often we don't think that God can use us. We think that we are the worst people in the world. We fail to realize all that God has for us in Christ. However, we truly have a wonderful life. For some reason, we don't enter into that life. We don't live this victorious, empowering, Christ-purchasing life. His death, burial, resurrection and ascension enable us to have this life.

Paul is writing to the church at Colossae, trying to encourage the believers there. He is trying to combat false teaching that had crept into this body of believers, to counteract it and show them they had wonderful lives in Christ. I want to show you—and we are praying that you would know—this wonderful life in Christ that He has for you. I want you to understand what God is doing in you, what He wants to do in you, what He's delivered you from and how you should respond.

We will delve into this passage, pull it apart and expand it. We want to make it a little bit bigger so that we can see all that God has for us and see the things that we need to avoid. There is something in our lives that is currently keeping us from experiencing the wonderful life that God has for us. Perhaps you love the world too much. Perhaps you're too comfortable where you are. Perhaps you're too complacent or you love your sin. Perhaps you love your deeds of the flesh too much to give them up, sacrifice them and truly live the life that God has planned for you.

Let's jump into our message, beginning at Colossians 1:9. Remember, Paul is imprisoned in Rome. Timothy is with him. Together they are writing this letter to the church at Colossae. Paul had never visited this church before, but he heavily influenced one of the disciples in the church—Epaphras. Colossians 1:9-14 says:

⁹And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. ¹¹May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Notice, Paul says that he is praying for the Colossians that they might know God's will for their lives. Paul wants them to grow and experience the wonderful life that God has for them which begins with knowing what He wants from them.

If you want to enter into this wonderful life that God has purchased for you, then it requires you to:

1. Learn the Will of God

We all want to know God's will. Who doesn't want to know God's will? "God, should I take this job or that job?" "Should I date this person or not?" "Should I do this with my kids or that with my kids?" "What should I do with my retirement?" "Should I go to school or not?" There are many questions about God's will. However, I think we have a very vague understanding of God's will so I want to break this down. I want to draw out and expand this concept, much like enlarging something on your phone. There are many facets, just like a diamond, to God's will.

1. **The Hidden Will of God.** Deuteronomy 19:29, *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."* These are mysteries beyond our ability to fathom. God has decided in His sovereignty and holiness, in His complete omniscience, to hide them from us for our good. We can see this in Revelation 10:4, too. The angel is about to say something and John prepares to write it down and God speaks from Heaven saying, "No. Don't write it down. I don't want them to know this. It is a mystery."
2. **The Decreed Will of God.** This is sometimes called the predestined, eternal and sovereign will of God that has been determined since the beginning of time. It is completely fixed. It includes God's salvation and God's choice in calling the nation of Israel; it includes the covenant promises of God. The decreed will of God is about who will be saved and all the things that He has completely established and fixed, such as how He has fixed the days of the week or set the rainbow to appear as a sign of His covenant with us.
3. **The Preceptive Will of God.** The root there is precept or principle of God's Word. This is seen in various commands in Scripture. We can see this in the New Testament generally, but several passages specifically. For example: it is the will of God that we give ourselves first to God then to others (2 Corinthians 8:5). It is the will of God that we work our jobs with integrity, knowing that we work not for man, but for God (Ephesians 6:6-7). It is God's will that we become fully mature and assured in God's will (Colossians 4:12). It is God's will that we abstain from sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 5:18). These are passages that say, "This is God's will for you." These are things that we can see in God's Word.
4. **The Preferential Will of God.** This is anything God delights to have happen. For example: we know that God delights in showing mercy, but He will still execute judgment. He prefers to show mercy rather than cast judgment. He doesn't delight in the death of the wicked. He doesn't find joy in that. He prefers that people come to saving knowledge of Christ.
5. **The Permissive Will of God.** While God wills that we do good things, He also permits us to exercise our wills. Samson is a great case in point (Judges 13-16). God establishes Samson and gifts him, but God tells him that he cannot have any fruit of the vine, he cannot touch any dead bodies and he cannot cut his hair. Yet, Samson does at least two of those three things. According to the Word of God we should not engage in sexual immorality or marry people outside of the faith yet Samson does all of these things. God permits him to do those things and Samson suffers the consequences of that sin. God permits us, or gives us rein, to sin or not to sin.
6. **The Directive Will of God.** This happens when God speaks through a dream, a vision or a prophecy. HOWEVER, God will never speak anything against His revealed Word. This is not the *modus operandi* for how God works. Most commonly, God speaks through His Word. Don't go seeking visions. God will do that in His sovereignty and the Word of God must always gauge these types of encounters. We see this in Acts 16:6, when the Holy Spirit forbids

the apostles from sharing the Word of God in Asia and Bithynia. Paul has a vision of a man from Macedonia calling Him to share the gospel there. Other examples include the Roman centurion, Cornelius, and his encounter with Peter (Acts 10). Peter has a vision of unclean animals coming down on a sheet, and he hears a voice saying, "Rise. Kill and eat." This vision shows that God is including the Gentiles in God's salvation plan. These are part of the directed or directive will of God.

7. **The Discerned Will of God.** This is where, I think, many of us are. The discerned will of God is when we are faced with a situation; we don't know exactly what to do. God's Word tells us to pray. When we are facing a trial and we don't know what to do, James 1:5-7 says that we should ask for wisdom. God doesn't always say, "Yes" or "No." Most of the time He shows us principles and precepts through His revealed will. He gives us free rein to choose for ourselves. What is God saying to you? What is He showing you? If you're wondering whether or not to take a new job, ask, "Will this job make me sin?" If it will, God doesn't want you to take that job. It's pretty clear. Look back at the Word of God and what it says. Proverbs 18:17 is an example of discerning the will of God. It says, "*The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.*" You are faced with a situation. Two witnesses stand in front of you. One person says something that sounds right. You are ready to agree with that person until the other person gives his side of the story. You don't make a judgment yet. Ask God for wisdom to discern the best way to go. The Scripture says that you are supposed to listen to the other person as well. Now you know that the other person is wrong. You've discerned the will of God in that situation. You are using the wisdom of Proverbs and the rest of Scripture to help influence your choice. We want God to tell us exactly what He wants us to do because we are lazy—we are spiritually lazy. God tells us to go to His Word, search it and continually take it in so that we might be able to discern the very will of God.

With that in mind, let's look at how we can understand the will of God, how we're to grow and how we should discern. If you are going to truly discern the will of God, it requires:

God's Spirit

Look at Colossians 1:9, "*And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.*" Notice the qualifying word, "spiritual." This is a spiritual issue. It is not one that can be discerned by receiving a PhD. This isn't going to be found in Oprah's Book Club. This is not a wisdom that's going to be found at Harvard or anyplace like that. This does not come from Ivy League schools, but the Spirit of God. Only the people who have the Spirit of God can discern the will of God in that regard. He is saying specifically that this is spiritual wisdom, perception, insight. It is talking about human relationships and how we are to interact with one another. We must have the Spirit of God within us.

This can be seen in 1 Corinthians 2:14, where Paul writes, "*The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*" Unbelievers can't get it. Only those who have the Spirit of God can understand and discern the true will of God. This doesn't mean that they can't be wise from a worldly standard, but there is spiritual wisdom that is different from this world's. Only believers, those who have been regenerated by the Spirit of God, can truly understand, apply and love the truths of God's will. If we are to know God's will, then we must have the Spirit of God within us.

The Spirit of God is only in those who have repented of their sin and truly trusted in Christ alone for salvation. The moment we trust in Christ, God gives us His Spirit. I'm not talking about a second work of grace or a second blessing. That's not what the Scriptures talk about. We have the Spirit of God the moment we trust in Christ alone for salvation. The moment we trust in Him, God gives us His Spirit in order to help transform us into the image of His Son. It is the Spirit of God Who guides us, convicts us of sin and helps us. Without God's Spirit, we have nothing.

Now how else can we learn or discern God's will? We have the Spirit of God. However we also need to:

Share Life Together

This might seem like a small point. Paul says at the beginning of this passage (Colossians 1:9), "*from the day we heard.*" This means that Paul is saying, "We heard about your life from Epaphras. You were sharing your life as a body. You became Christians. You didn't alienate yourselves. You didn't become lone rangers. You shared your lives, opening up to Epaphras who shared with us. Now we are praying for you." We need to open up our lives and let people know what's going on. It is a scary thing to open up to other people. Yet, here is what the Colossians are doing: they are laying themselves out and they are

opening themselves up. Paul exclaims, "We thank God for you!" Get involved in a group with other believers for mutual accountability and for prayer. You might not know everything; you may not know the Scriptures. You might not feel comfortable praying out loud. That's okay! We've all been there at one time or another. Living life together means growing together. God wants us to do this, "*grow in the knowledge of his will.*"

How can we grow in the knowledge of His will if we are not reading the Word of God and having other people speak into our lives? We need other people. Share life together.

Seek God in Prayer

Paul and Timothy were praying for others. We also need to pray. We need to seek God in prayer. Sustained, reflective, meditative prayer. It is when we are in sustained and focused prayer that God's Spirit is able to help us. What happens when we seek God in prayer? When we don't even know what words to pray? Romans 8:26-27 says:

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

In 1 Corinthians 2:10-13, Paul says:

These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

You need to seek God yourself. When you have the Spirit of God within you, you're trying to discern and do what the Spirit of God wants; you have to give Him time to speak that truth in your life. The problem is you're too busy. You have too many distractions. You need to be able to disconnect. Even the thought of that scares many of you. Turning off your cellphone, turning off the TV, closing your computer, putting away your tablet, turning off the radio. Many of you have a very shallow faith and God is calling you to a deeper spiritual life. You can't microwave godliness. Your sanctification takes time. Anything truly worth the effort takes time, like great works of art or beautiful natural wonders. They didn't appear in a moment. It wasn't "Extreme Natural Wonder Makeover." It was time. It means putting ourselves in the presence of God and letting Him change us from the inside out. We need to make sure that we are seeking God in prayer.

Search the Bible

When we're talking about the will of God, notice in this passage, "*...filled with the knowledge of His will*" (Colossians 1:9). The word "filled" is in the passive voice which means that we are the recipients of the action. God filled the people of Colossae and He will fill us. What did God fill them with? He filled them with the knowledge of His will. Not knowledge of other worlds, not special frames of knowledge, but the knowledge of His will which is found in His Word.

He wants them to also have understanding. This word refers to the act of putting together facts and information; drawing conclusions and seeing relationships. It's a way of understanding the discerned will of God. We need to search the Bible. Go to the Word of God when you're hurting, when you're angry, when you're frustrated, when you're trying to deal with your spouse, when your kids are rebellious. Do you go to the Word of God and see what God says about it? Where do you go?

2. Live a Life Worthy of God

What is all of this for? Even as we have looked at the seven facets of God's will, all of them are discerned from Scripture. Therefore we cannot regulate, overlook or alter the Word of God. We can't shift it to make room for our sin. We must place ourselves under God's Word. That is what is best for us. Why do we need to know the will of God? Look at Colossians 1:10, "*so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*" God wants you to know His will that you might live a life worthy of God. Do you feel like your life is worthy of the Lord?

I remember hearing from a missionary once who was on furlough. He said, "I hope to live my life in such a way that God would walk by and see me working and say, 'He's doing a good job. He's okay. He's doing alright.'" Because I have been working hard and giving my life. I want to please Him. He is the only One I want to truly please. I want to live a life worthy of Him." Living a

wonderful life means living a life that is worthy of Him, a life that is honorable to Him. It is not underhanded, devious or hypocritical. It is one that God wants above all else.

The word "walk" here is used to denote the conduct of one's life. We see this throughout Scripture. We are to walk humbly (Micah 6:8), in truth (3 John 1:4), in love (Ephesians 5:2), by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Walking in Scripture is always a metaphor concerning how we are to conduct our lives. Here Paul says, "I want you to walk in a manner worthy of God. A life that is honorable in His sight. Finding a way that pleases Him, that is worthy of Him."

Shortly after we got married, I was trying to help with laundry. I proceeded to fold towels. I can't fold the sheets correctly; my wife knows that I can't do that. I can't fold any of her clothes; they're too small. I just wrap them up and throw them in the drawer. These days I can't even tell the difference between my kids' clothes. But I can fold towels; at least I thought I could.

So I get the towels and fold them, putting them all together. I'm feeling proud of myself. But my wife takes them all out and says, "You folded them wrong." "How could I fold them wrong? I folded! I did something to help you." She says, "No, you have to fold them this way." I had no idea that there was a certain way to fold towels. I had to learn what was pleasing in her sight and act accordingly. I've had to do a lot of that in my life. Anyone who is married knows that you have to learn to please your spouse. They like things to be done in certain ways. You learn together.

You do this with God as well. You learn to please Him. In order to live a life worthy of Him, you have to learn what pleases Him. This requires:

The right perspective

You can't see things the way God does. This is why you need to go to the Word of God in sustained reflection and prayer so that God can shape your mind.

When I was in my early 20's I had a friend who had a pumpkin patch. They had a large hay-bale maze and a group of us went through the maze and got incredibly lost. Not knowing exactly what to do, I was ready to knock down the bales in frustration. My friend who had made it, walked on top of the bales to find us because he knew that we were lost. He told us how to get out. There were two reasons why he knew how to get out:

1. He helped create the maze
2. He had a perspective above ours

When we looked to him and followed his direction we got out. The same is true with God. When we look to Him we understand that He created the world, He knows how it functions and He can see things differently than we can. He gives us His perspective on things. That's why we need to have the knowledge of His will to get His perspective on how we are to live and act.

God's power

Let's jump back into the text. Look at Colossians 1:11, "*May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.*" The word "power" here is *dunamis* in the Greek. It is often used in reference to the Holy Spirit. What Paul is saying here is that if we are going to live a life worthy of God, we not only need the right perspective, we also have to have God's power. We don't strengthen ourselves. We have a tendency to try and pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. However, in the Christian walk that doesn't get you anywhere. It is not a bootstrap faith. It is finding strength in the Lord our God.

I love the story of when David, after he was with the Philistines, comes back and finds the city where his family had been taken into captivity. Everyone wants to stone David because they've come back from war to find their families gone. First Samuel 30:6 says, "*David found strength in the Lord, his God.*" He found his power in God Himself and he was strengthened because of it. When everyone else had turned against him, he turned to God and God gave him power. David then led the people to rescue their families and all was well.

We need God's power to live the life that God has for us. This means that we cannot continue to live in a state of sin. We have to declare war on sin. We let entertainment and material things keep us from experiencing the power and life that God has for us. We need to cultivate that power by being filled with the Spirit, taking in the things of the Spirit of God.

We need to be *“strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might.”* This refers to the inherent strength that displays itself in rule over others. Here it refers to the might that is characteristic of His glory. It indicates His awesome radiance of deity. God is ruling and reigning, and the power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in us.

We are strengthened as we worship God. Singing in worship is huge. Men, singing isn't just for women. It may be in a higher key, but it's not just for women. We are to come into His presence with thanksgiving (Psalm 95:2) and His courts with praise (Psalm 100:4). We are to sing to the Lord. Why does God command us to do that? Just to go through the motions? To fill up a service? God wants to communicate His presence and His power to us. God wants to give us Himself. That's why God calls us to praise His Name. If we're going to experience God's power, we need to make sure that we are praising God, not just showing up for the sermon. Don't show up late on Sunday morning. We need to show up and worship with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. The music is not just filler until we get to the message. It is honoring and praising God. That's the ball game: praising Him.

Producing fruit

Let's go back to Colossians 1:10. *“So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”* Living a life worthy of God also means producing fruit. If you are a follower of Jesus, you will bear fruit. It is a present, active participle which means that it is a constant, ongoing thing. This isn't a one-time action. People come up to me all the time and tell me that they were a Sunday school teacher 45 years ago. When I ask them what they are doing now, they tell me that they have done their time. It doesn't work that way. You need to produce fruit even into your old age. Continually produce fruit.

Author and pastor David Platt, who just became the president of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, said that the reason why many of us don't make disciples is because we aren't disciples ourselves. Look at your life. Are you producing fruit? Reflect on this. You don't have to be Billy Graham, but do you see a progression in your life? Are you growing in holiness? There are heart checks and hard facts:

- Hard facts are buildings, the bodies, the budgets and the things that you can put on a stat sheet.
- Then there are the heart checks, which means that you are growing in holiness, forsaking sin, taking another step of faith, trusting God in a greater way, increasing in the knowledge of God.

The two must be together. Make sure that you are producing fruit. What is keeping you from producing fruit? What is your excuse? When you stand in the presence of God, will it be a good excuse? I ask myself the same questions. We must produce fruit. We must grow in our ministry and knowledge. The phrase *“growing in knowledge”* can also be translated, *“growing by knowledge.”* Just like dew and rain nurture plants, so are we to grow by the knowledge of God.

Persevering until the end

Notice the next phrase in Colossians 1:11, *“for all endurance.”* This means, *“remaining under, endurance, steadfastness.”* God enables us to remain under the challenges that He allots in life. If we are going to live lives worthy of God, we need to persevere to the end. The total trajectory of our lives should always be toward Christ; continually walking with Him. This does not mean, *“I prayed a prayer at camp when I was 12. I'm living like a complete pagan now, but I'm okay with God.”* The Bible doesn't make that kind of distinction. It's either all or nothing. We must persevere until the end; until Christ takes us home or we die.

I am reminded of the story of the dog soldiers who were Cheyenne soldiers in the 1800's. They were an elite group of warriors who were extremely aggressive in battle and instilled fear in their enemies. They would come to battle in full regalia: headdresses, war paint, deerskins, spears, bows and arrows. They were intimidating. As they rode into battle they would jump off their horses and drive stakes into the ground, proclaiming they would be there and fight till the death. There would be no turning back or quitting. They would either win, or die trying. I like that mentality. We must be dog soldiers for Jesus.

Are you fighting that seriously? Are you holding on, staking your claim? Many of you are good until it gets uncomfortable or you are offended, then you leave. This mentality is too common. You need to see past that and work through it. Don't let it get to you. The enemy that you battle is far greater. Make sure that Satan doesn't get a foothold and divide you. We must bond together and persevere to the end, making sure that we battle together.

Patience with joy

Notice what is coupled with endurance: patience with joy. Patience here means longsuffering, self-restraint, not hastily avenging wrongdoing. If we're going to live lives that God wants us to live, we must overlook the faults of others. Restrain yourself. Don't try avenging a wrong. Endure wrongs patiently, even those given by other believers.

Praising God for all that He has done

In Colossians 1:12 we ought to be "...*giving thanks to the Father...*" Living a life worthy of God means praising God for all that He has done. Everything that we do, everything involved with understanding God's will and living lives worthy of God must result in praise and worship unto God. That is the entire purpose of our lives. When we are praising God we experience the fullness and joy of God. We can't know that until we are truly giving ourselves whole-heartedly in praise and thanksgiving. God calls us to give thanks. Why? He wants to give us Himself. By thanking God, we acknowledge Him; we think about Him. He shows us how glorious and wondrous He is. Make sure that you are praising God.

3. Leave behind our old way of life

Why do we give thanks? Colossians 1:12-14 says, "*Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered 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.*" Here Paul tells us that we have been transferred; we are different than we were. He tells us that he wants us to leave our old lives behind. There is something more glorious that God has for us. If we are going to live that wonderful life that God has for us it requires that we leave our old ways behind. Don't go back.

When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19, Lot and his wife and children fled the city when the angels warned them of the coming destruction. What was the one thing that they were told not to do? Look back. What did Lot's wife do? She turned back and became a pillar of salt. This is a picture of looking back on your former sinful life apart from Christ. God tells you to leave that life behind. That life is gone. You are a new creature. Your sins have been forgiven. You have been rescued from the domain of darkness. You have been transferred into the Kingdom of God's Son. God has given you an inheritance beyond your ability to understand. Leave behind your old way of life. What is before you is so much greater than what is behind. Press on to receive the message and the upward call in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14). What God has planned in front of you is far greater than anything behind you. You must leave behind your old way of life.

Rewarded with God's saints

What has God given you? Look at Colossians 1:12, "*Giving thanks to God the father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.*" The word for qualified here means "to make sufficient, qualify, authorize." God has authorized you to receive the inheritance that Jesus has earned. You are now a recipient. Everything that He has is yours. Paul intentionally borrows Old Testament covenantal language for the people of God in the Old Testament. We have been grafted in to God's promises and His plan to receive the glorious inheritance that has been planned since the foundation of the world. God has given you His inheritance.

How would you like to get a phone call, "By the way, Bill Gates just died along with his whole family. We have discovered that you are a long-lost cousin. You have inherited the entire Microsoft fortune." What would you do? First thing you would do is tithe. That's the first thing! I'm just kidding.

What will you do with the inheritance? How will you respond to it? What you have in Christ is greater than that. Earthly fortunes will pass away, but this is an inheritance that Peter says is "*imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*" (1 Peter 1:4-5). That is the inheritance that you have in Christ. No one can take it away from you. The government cannot regulate it. Thieves cannot break in and steal it. You can't lose it. God has given it to you. It is kept in heaven and it is waiting for you. You have a reward beyond your ability to fathom.

Rescued from Satan

Paul also shows you what you have been delivered from. Colossians 1:13, "*He has delivered us from the domain of darkness.*" You have been rescued from Satan. Even though you never followed Satan, 2 Corinthians 4:4 clearly states that the god of this world,

Satan, has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the glory and majesty and light of Christ. Satan has blinded unbelievers. They can't see Who Jesus is. They don't get it. They don't have the Spirit of God. God sovereignly rescued you. You didn't rescue yourself. You didn't escape from a prison camp. You were rescued; you were freed by the Son of God. He rescued you from the domain of darkness, that's Satan's camp.

Relocated to the Kingdom of God's Son

Not only did He set us free from the domain of darkness, but He also, *"transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son."* He relocated you to the Kingdom of God's Son. You went from the outhouse to the penthouse, as Tony Evans would say. He has transformed you. He has given you all of these blessings. What Jesus has earned He has given you. You are part of His Kingdom. That is an amazing thing. You have been relocated to God's Kingdom.

Redeemed from our sins

This is a key point. Colossians 1:14, *"In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."* Jesus has set you free from your sins. We could talk about Satan, but many of you aren't battling Satan on a daily basis. The problem that you have is with yourself and the body of death that you carry around. That's what Paul calls it in Romans 7:24, *"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"*

Virgil, the Greek poet, describes how the Romans would tie a captive to a dead body as punishment. They would be joined face-to-face until the smell got so bad that it would destroy the life of the living victim. Imagine a corpse tied to you face-to-face and the fumes emanating from that body. This is the image that Paul is conjuring. The body that we live in is a body of death; who will deliver us from it? Virgil says:

The living and the dead at his command
Were coupled face to face and hand to hand
Till choked with stench and loathed embraces tied
The lingering wretches pined away and died

The body of death will kill them! Even though it's a different body that is outside of them, the stench will overcome them and kill them. Those fumes become noxious. So Paul says, "Who will deliver me from this body of death that I inhabit? Who will set me free? I can't continue in this sin. I can't hold on to it. Someone must set me free. Someone must cut the chains."

That's what Jesus did. The Son of Man came to set us free from our sin; not that we might continue to play with it, but that we might be set free from it. He has set us free from the power of sin. He's set us free from the penalty of sin. In the future, He will set us free from the very presence of sin. When we see Christ, high and lifted up as the ruling Conqueror, we will praise His Name. We have been redeemed from our sins.

All of that knowledge should cause us to stop and say, "I have a wonderful life. I need to learn to live that life. I have been set free from my past. I must grow in the will and knowledge of God so that I might live a life worthy of God, resulting in worship to God." God has set you free and He has given you this wonderful life. You can enter into this life that Christ has given you here and now, but the best life is yet to come. He has given us a foretaste of His glory for our joy. This wonderful life is only available to all whom the Father draws to the Son. Is He drawing you? Don't resist. Place your trust and faith in Christ by repenting of your sin and believing in Him today and you will be saved (Romans 10:9-10).