

What God Has Done For Every Believer: Part I

Colossians 1:12-14

In 1799, twelve year old Conrad Reed of Cabarrus County, NC was playing in a creek behind his house one Sunday afternoon when he found a big yellow rock. His father didn't know what to do with it other than use it for a door stop. The big rock stayed there by the door for the next three years. That's when friends of the family encouraged them to try to find out what this unusual rock was.

So Mr. Reed took it to a jeweler here in Fayetteville, (not Rhudy) who immediately recognized it as a large gold nugget weighing roughly 17 pounds. The jeweler bought it for \$3.50 knowing full well that it was worth over \$3,000 which was a fortune in those days. Of course, Reed was clueless and only later learned that he had been tricked by this unscrupulous merchant. Thankfully, the injustice was partially corrected, and Reed eventually opened the first gold mine in the southeast.

This story reflects a similar confusion that Paul discovered in the Colossian church. It seems that some false teachers had infiltrated the congregation bringing with them the promise of a higher level of spirituality than the average believer possessed. It was fine that they had accepted Christ, but they were missing out on the true blessings of God which they, the newcomers, could supposedly help them find.

Well, Paul wanted to correct that in no uncertain terms. So after praying for the church to be strong in their faith, he expressed thanksgiving for what God had already done in their lives. And in the process the church was reminded that they already possessed spiritual blessings that far out weighed anything these elitists could ever hope to offer.

I think we need to be reminded of the same thing in our day. For though believers are naturally grateful for their salvation, many of them don't really know what God has already done in their lives as a part of His redeeming work. So they go on these endless chases for the next conference, the next encounter with the Holy Spirit, the next anointed worship service and more believing that others have something they don't have. And in the process they end up defeated and discouraged looking for that mysterious key to spiritual riches not knowing the great treasure they already possess.

Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about. You've been on some of those religious wild goose chases that led to nowhere. And even if you've

never been on such a chase, you've probably wondered if you're missing out on something that God has for you.

Well, I've got good news. If you're a believer, God has already done some amazing things in your life that if understood and affirmed will make a powerful impact on your spiritual confidence and lifestyle. So what has God done? It's going to take us two weeks to fully answer that question. So let's get started by reading Colossians 1:12-14.

Based on this text, there are six things that God has already done in our lives the moment he gave us our salvation. We'll cover the first three today and the rest next Sunday.

I. God has qualified us to share in the inheritance of eternity.

Let me bottom line this for you. Right now you are already qualified for full entrance into heaven. That's right. All the conditions that are necessary for entrance into God's eternal kingdom have already been met. And there's nothing left for you to do to add to it.

Sounds great doesn't it? And yet some of you are hesitant. The reason you're hesitant is the fact you know that some of your actions and attitudes are less than Christlike. So in the back of your mind you've convinced yourself that even though you've committed yourself to Christ, you still have a ways to go before you are really qualified to enter into God's kingdom.

Well, if that's the case, let me remind you of something. Your qualification is not based on you and what you've done. It's based on Christ and what He's done. It doesn't matter how high on the spiritual ladder you're able to climb. It still wouldn't be enough to qualify you to inherit the kingdom of heaven. But Christ has done for you what you could not do for yourself.

Listen to how the New Living Translation describes this in Philippians 3 - "Everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with Him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith."

I guess you could call it the new math of the Kingdom. In the old math being qualified for an eternal inheritance is like this: Christ's death + my spiritual effort = qualification. But in the new math it's like this: Christ's death + my faith = qualification.

So it's not what you do. It's trusting what Christ did. And people who trust Him become qualified for the inheritance of eternity. And because they

have such an inheritance they're drawn to live as Christ would have them live. And this is something God has done for every single believer.

But there's more.

II. God has rescued us from the world of darkness.

The Bible often refers to that which is apart from God as being in darkness. Jesus described it in the third chapter of John's gospel: "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil." In Romans 1, Paul indicated that the result of people who reject God's truth is that "their foolish heart was darkened." Finally, several times in the gospels Jesus uses the phrase "outer darkness" to describe the consequences that come upon those who reject God.

Clearly then, spiritual darkness is a bad thing. And yet believers have no need to fear. Paul says that we have been rescued from the domain of darkness. Hear that again. We have been rescued from the domain or the kingdom of darkness. We didn't escape the darkness. We didn't have the will nor the power to do that. Instead we were rescued. And who was it that rescued us? None other than Christ Himself. When He died on the cross, He made our rescue possible. And the moment we opened our hearts to Him by faith that rescue happened.

And yet you read all the time about deliverance ministries that target unsuspecting believers telling them that the powers of darkness have them in bondage and that's why they have so many problems.

In fact, I went on the web and it's amazing what people believe about such stuff. For instance one web site claimed that believers need to be delivered from demons because they create such things as arthritis. Another web site states that one of the indicators that a person is in need of demonic deliverance is if they talk too much. And finally, another web site said that even after salvation believers are still under the control of Satan until he is cast out of their lives.

Perish the thought. Listen, you don't need to be delivered from a power from which you have already been rescued. Now granted some people don't live as if they're rescued. They live like they're still in bondage, because they aren't filling their minds with God's transforming truths. And that's tragic. But it doesn't change the reality. Believers have been rescued.

So if you've thought that your lack of spiritual victory is due to some evil force in control of your life, think again. Right now you are delivered. God has rescued you, and now it's your job to live like a rescued person. And if

you will, you will experience life at a whole new level because of what God has already done in your life. But that's not all.

III. God has transferred us to the Kingdom of Christ.

What a wonderful truth this is. We're not only qualified to share in the future inheritance of the saints and rescued from our past bondage to the domain of darkness, but we're also presently transferred into the Kingdom of God's beloved Son. That means that right here and now you are a citizen of a whole new Kingdom with all the rights and privileges that go along with being a citizen.

Peter put it this way in his first letter, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

This is what happened the moment you were transferred into the Kingdom of Christ. No more are you ruled by cruel forces that want only to deceive and destroy you. Now you are guided by one who loves you and has given his very life to bring you into a kingdom of spiritual safety and hope.

The image that comes to mind is what happened to three American contract workers who were recently rescued after over five years of captivity in the jungles of Columbia. Marc Gonzalves, Keith Stansell, and Thomas Howes described meals of rice and beans. Their bed was the ground under a patched plastic tarp. They bathed in rivers when they weren't chained by the neck to trees. And they were forced on long marches to new hideouts under the jungle canopy.

They assumed that they were transferred yet again when helicopters landed and picked them up. It was only when they were taking off that they were told that they were being liberated.

According to reports, the former captives as weak as they were jumped up and down with excitement. Later they would give the following statement: "For five and half long years, we all hoped and prayed this day would come. Now that it has, we're just overwhelmed with emotion. The love and joy we're all experiencing is beyond description."

I bet it is. Imagine going for months on end never knowing if you would ever see your family again, or if disease would take your life before you were rescued, or if you could even mentally hold on during the ordeal. And then not only to be rescued but to be transferred back to your homeland - to freedom. It's hard to take it all in.

But that's exactly what God has done for every believer. Though we live among multitudes who are still in captivity, we are free. We live in the Kingdom of the beloved son of God. It's a kingdom of forgiveness and hope, a kingdom of belonging and acceptance, a kingdom of purpose and meaning. And we have been transferred as first class citizens of this very kingdom.

No wonder Paul would burst forth in thanksgiving. God has qualified, rescued and transferred his people. And that's true for everyone that has placed their faith in Christ.

So if you're a believer, then you need to celebrate what God has done in your life. Don't waste one more second thinking that you're missing out on some secret blessing. God has already done great things in your life. So rejoice.

And if you've not been living like a qualified, rescued and transferred person, then it's time to get back on track. No more half-hearted faith. No more compromised morals. No more lackluster service. Renew your faith in him and be the person you were saved to be.

And finally, if you aren't a Christ follower yet, I want you to know that God can do these very same things for you if you'll open your heart to Him. Ask Him to forgive your sins. Yield to Him as the leader of your life. If you will, then these great blessings will be yours as well.

So as we sing our hymn of commitment, I invite you to respond to the God who has done and will do great things.