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[0:00] Well, it would be great if you could turn back to Colossians chapter 1, and we're going to be looking at verses 1 through 14 this evening. So let me pray and ask for God's help.

Lord, may the words of my mouth, may the meditation of all of our hearts be pleasing and acceptable in your sight. We pray this in the name of our rock and our redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. So a few months ago, I read the story about three brothers living in northern California, and they were clearing out their late mother's home. She'd passed away just before the pandemic in 2020, and for four years, her house sat untouched, frozen in time, as it were. And so in December 2024, the three brothers decided it was time to go through her stuff. Decades of memories. This was their childhood home, and it was time to clear it all out and prepare it for sale. So they rolled up their sleeves, glove on, dusk masks ready. They expected cobwebs, clutter, long emotional hours of deciding what to keep and what to let go.

What they did not expect to find was treasure. Up in the attic, buried under a stack of yellowed newspapers, one of the book. And in the newspapers, one of the brothers found a plain cardboard box.

The sort of box that you would be tempted to throw away without even opening. But his curiosity won the day, and he opened the box. And inside the box was a comic book. Superman number one.

[1:45] Superman. The first solo comic book of Superman, published in 1939. Their mum had bought it when she was just nine years old. It was in pristine condition. Somehow it had been tucked away in this box and forgotten about, and had lay there for nearly a century. Now the brothers were inquisitive as to whether this old comic book might have any value. So they contacted an auction house, and they came and examined it, authenticated it, and then they graded it. A few months ago, November 2025, that comic book was sold at auction for a whopping \$9.12 million, a record-breaking sale. These brothers could not believe their inheritance. After the sale, one of the brothers was interviewed, and some of the things he said in that interview have stayed with me. He said, this discovery was surreal. The money is astonishing for a comic book. However, what has meant the most of us is not the money? It's our mother. This comic book that was sold at auction, it pointed back to her. Her childhood, her loves, her passions. And then he said something deeply moving. For years, we enjoyed such a good relationship with our mum. But we realize now that we didn't fully know or enjoy all that there was all that there was to know about mum. We hadn't taken the time to appreciate her childhood passions and loves. We didn't even know what was already ours because of her. And as I heard that, I thought, that is a perfect parable of what we're like as Christians. We belong to Jesus Christ.

We are united to him. In him, we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. But just like these three brothers who realized they didn't take the time to enjoy and appreciate all that was theirs because of their mum, you and I sometimes forget all that is ours because of Christ. In Christ, we are loved. In Christ, we are forgiven. In Christ, we are declared righteous. In Christ, we are reconciled. We are adopted. We are no longer under sin's reign or dominion. In Christ, we are heirs of glory. In Christ, we have peace with God. In Christ, we have a hope that does not

disappoint. In Christ, we have life and life in its abundance. It was John Owen who said, our greatest hindrance in the Christian life is not our lack of effort, but our lack of acquaintedness with Christ and our privileges in him. Our greatest hindrance in the Christian life is not our lack of effort, but our acquaintedness with Christ and our privileges in him. In other words, our problem in the Christian life is not that we try too little, it's that we know Christ too little.

I don't know if you appreciate this, but it's one of the things I'm coming to appreciate as I study this book of Colossians. In Christ, we possess fullness, but so often we live like we're lacking.

In Christ, we have everything, but sometimes you would look at our lives and you wouldn't realize that fact. And what's fascinating, it's that very tension that led the Apostle Paul to write this letter to the church in Colossae. Epaphras had planted this church. So many people came to Christ in this church, but as we're continuing in the faith, they started to wonder, is Christ sufficient for the Christian life? Is he enough to sustain me, to sanctify me, to mature me? And to make matters worse, false teachers crept into the church and they said, you know, Christ isn't enough.

[6:36] Christ, yes, to get into the Christian life, but if you want to grow in the Christian life, if you want maturity in your Christian life, if you want power in your Christian life, well, you're going to need some things. Jesus plus dietary requirements. Jesus plus angelic encounters.

Jesus plus spiritual secret knowledge. And Paul picks up his pen and says, nonsense. Colossian Christians, in Christ, you are complete. In Christ, you have everything you need. And so my prayer for this weekend is, as we come here, is that the Holy Spirit would open the eyes of us who are believers to see everything that we have in Christ.

So that we would rest all of our sufficiency and trust in him. And if you're not yet a Christian, our prayer is that you would come to see that all that you are longing for, searching for, is found in him and in him alone. Now, we're going to look at verses 1 through 14. And it's here that Paul begins to anchor these Christians who are tempted to doubt that Christ is enough for the Christian life in the realities of the gospel. And I've got three simple points. Verses 1 and 2, gospel identity. Paul tells them who they are in Christ. Verses 3 to 8, gospel reality, or gospel realities. Because Paul shares with them what the gospel is doing in their lives, what the gospel is doing in their world, and why they should trust in the truth and the power of the gospel. And then finally, verses 9 to 14, Paul prays for these Colossian Christians to know, to experience gospel maturity. So let's get going.

Let's look at verses 1 and 2. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae, grace to you and peace from God our Father. Paul begins this letter as he begins many of his letters. He introduces himself, and then he greets his audience, the

Colossian Christians. Now, in this case, he's very deliberate with all that he says, because he knows that these false teachers have destabilized these young Christians, they've shaken their confidence, and they've made them feel spiritually insufficient. And Paul wants to remind them, hold up. Do you know who you are in Christ? Look at how Paul introduces himself. He says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Everything that Paul says about himself is shaped by, informed by, the Lord Jesus Christ. He doesn't define himself by his credentials, his achievements, his spiritual pedigree. He defines himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus.

He's never visited the church in Colossae, and he reminds them he's a sent one by the will of God. In other words, he says to them, listen, as I write to you, my authority comes not from me.

[10:02] I'm not a self-appointed, self-selected messenger of Christ. I'm a God-sent messenger of Christ. But as he introduces himself, he introduces his colleague, Timothy.

And he says there, and Timothy, our brother. Now, Timothy was the equivalent of Gordon. He was Paul's minister in training. And he could have said, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, and Timothy, my assistant minister. But he doesn't say that. He says, Timothy, our brother.

Because when you're in Christ, your relationship is not defined by your role. Your relationship is defined by your relationship to Christ. And in Christ, we are siblings.

We are brothers and sisters. Now, as Paul just introduced himself, he's given a taste of what is to come. Now, he addresses the Colossian Christians. And this is marvelous. Notice the first thing he says to them. To the saints. If you've got your own Bible there, you could underline and circle that. Saints. Who are the Christians in Colossae? They are saints.

What comes to your mind when you think of a saint? Saint Andrew? Saint Patrick? Do you think of stained glass windows and pictures of the disciples, the apostles, saints and windows canonized by the Catholic Church? The super spiritual elite Christian?

[11:45] Christian? When Paul wrote saint here, what he thought about was every believer in Christ. Every single person who is in Christ is a saint. Literally, the word means a holy one, a set-apart one by God.

Carloway, everyone here tonight who's a Christian, you're a saint. And you're a saint not because of your own performance. You're a saint because of Christ's performance. Your sainthood is in him.

He has made you holy. This is your identity. Now, I don't know about you, but my temptation in life is to live in my head by thinking of my identity in terms of my family or my past, my failures or my achievements, more so to think of my identity in terms of my work. If you and I were to believe our identity rests in our work or our performance, we'll live an anxious and exhausted Christian life.

Because work cannot satisfy us. If we rest our identity in our failings, our shortcomings, or even our successes, we'll live defeated, ashamed, wracked with guilt. If we rest our identity on people's approval or acceptance of us, we'll live enslaved to other people's opinions. But Paul would say to us, rest your identity in Christ. Do you know that knowing who you are in Christ is not theological trivia? It's spiritual oxygen. It's life-giving. If you know who you are in Christ, so when you suffer, you're anchored. If you know who you are in Christ, when you're successful, you can remain humble. If you know who you are in

Christ, when you fail, you can feel lifted up and encouraged. But if it were not enough to call them saints, Paul goes on and he says to them, your first name's saint, your second name's faithful.

Now these young Colossian Christians, I bet you they did not feel faithful. If anything, in their subjective experience of their Christian life, they felt faithless, they were asking questions, is Christ enough? But Paul says they're faithful brothers and sisters in Christ. Because listen, the faithfulness of every Christian is rooted and grounded, not in our grip of Christ, but of Christ's grip on us.

[14:44] Now it's the next two words in that sentence that will carry the whole weight of this letter. To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ.

If you're a Christian here tonight, hear this loudly and clearly. Here is your identity. You are in Christ.

Christ. What does that mean? What that means is all that is true of Christ is true of you.

So when Christ lived his perfect life of obedience, his life has become your life. Christ's death is your death. Christ's resurrection guarantees your resurrection. Christ's righteousness is your righteousness. Christ's inheritance is yours. All that is true of Christ is now true of you. Paul will go on and say in Colossians chapter 1 verse 27, it's not just that you are in Christ, it's that Christ Christ is in you. And that is the hope of glory. And all of this is because of his amazing grace.

All of this is undeserved, unmerited, underearned. You did nothing. He did everything. Now here's the reality. If you're a Christian. If you're anything like me. You struggle with that spiritual ailment of being a spiritual amnesiac. You forget all the time who you are. You forget that which is most true about you, that you are in Christ and Christ is in you. In London, a couple of the ladies in our church are involved in a ministry in the estate right across the street from our church. So our church is in the city of London, just down the street from St. Paul's Cathedral. And across from our church is the Barbican estate. And in one of the community halls there, there's this social outreach called Memory Cafe. It's where older people with memory difficulties go to, to sing songs from their childhood, to be reminded of things from their childhood, so that they can remember who they are. In many ways, this tonight and tomorrow, it's a spiritual memory cafe. The songs that we've been singing are to remind us of who Christ is and what is true of us in Christ. Psalm 103, all glory be to Christ. Psalm 8. Tomorrow as we gather around the table, what are we doing? We're remembering His death for the forgiveness of our sins, lest we forget.

[17:51] We proclaim that until He comes again. And Paul, in this letter, he wants these Christians to remember who they are, that they are in Christ. And listen, as we go on, you're going to fathom some of the depths and the glories of being in Christ. Paul puts it so eloquently in chapter 3. Our life is hidden with Christ in God. And as we go through this, we don't want to forget that. Grace and peace to you from God our Father. All that is true of our gospel identity is because God's amazing

grace.

Well, having reminded us of our identity, Paul now shows these Colossian Christians what flows from their identity. Here are some of the most amazing gospel realities. Look at verse 3 and 4 and 5.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. Since we've heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, there's that word again, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. He's lifted their eyes to who they are in Christ. Now he wants to open their eyes to what Christ is doing within them. Now here's the striking thing. Paul had never been to Colossae. So everything that he prays for them is based on a report that he's received from his fellow colleague, Epaphras.

And what does Paul do when he hears about them? He thanks God for them. We always thank God when we pray for you. One of the clearest signs that someone understands who they are in Christ. One of the clearest signs that someone understands the grace of the gospel is that gratitude becomes your native language. Thankfulness overflows from you. When you understand that your identity is a gift and not an achievement, thanksgiving becomes instinctive. And Paul, who is so aware that his identity is in Christ, as he prays for these Colossian Christians, does so with overflowing thanksgiving.

[20:23] And what does he thank God for about them? Three things. Faith, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus. Love, of the love that you have for all the saints. And because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, faith, love, hope. Now, notice the order here. This is striking. We would say, I believe, therefore I hope. That's not what Paul says. Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, you have faith in Christ Jesus and love for all the saints. It's like he flips it on his head.

Because you have hope, faith and love flow and flourish. Hope is what causes their faith to thrive and flourish as Christians. And often it's when we take our eyes off the hope that is ours in Christ. It's in those moments our faith falter. It's in those moments that our love weakens. And here's the incredible thing about Christian hope. It's not like any other hope in this world.

One preacher defines hope like this. It's a confident expectation of a guaranteed result. Because Christ Jesus rose from the grave. Because that past event happened.

It is a sure and certain fact that all who believe in him at the last shall be raised. But that future hope based on that past event, according to the Apostle Paul, has life-changing present-day realities.

[22:14] In October of last year, I took the funeral of a 27-year-old member of London City Presbyterian Church. Rue Macaranga.

She battled with cancer for seven years. It was one of the hardest experiences, ministering to her and her family because she was so young and so full of life.

But the cancer just sapped the life from her. It was heartbreaking to watch on. But here's the thing. In her sorrow and in her suffering, she radiated hope.

Because she knew that Christ was our only hope in life and death. She knew that she belonged to Christ, both body and soul.

She knew where she was going. She knew that she had a future hope. And so here's the fascinating thing about Rue Macaranga. She lived for Christ.

[23:15] For her to live was Christ. So she loved freely and deeply. Because of her hope, she didn't hold on to the things of this world closely.

She was willing to let them go because her hope impacted how she lived. And Paul says, for us, that's the way it's supposed to be. And I want you to see this, right?

As people of hope, Paul doesn't highlight the intensity of faith. He doesn't say, because of the strength of their faith in Christ Jesus, he says, we heard of your faith. And he highlights the object in Christ Jesus.

Anyone who places their faith and trust in Christ has true, life-giving hope because of Christ. It's not the intensity of your faith that saves.

It's not the intensity of your faith that sanctifies. It's not the intensity of your faith that sustains us. It's the object. It's Christ. And don't miss this.

[24:25] Love for all the saints. Do you know, if you're a saint because of what Christ has done for you, and you see another brother or sister in Christ, another sibling in Christ, you cannot but love them.

Because all that is true of them in Christ is true of you. And Paul says, real sainthood is never private spirituality.

It always spills out. The evidence, one clear evidence that the gospel is alive in people, in God's people, is that we love one another.

Well, having clarified some of the gospel realities within them, Paul wants to just quickly tell them that the gospel that they have heard and believed is both true and powerful.

Look at verse six. Halfway through verse five, sorry. Of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world, it is bearing fruit and growing, as it also does among you since the day you heard it and understood it, the grace of God in truth.

[25:40] There's two words, there's two times in this section, verse five, the word of truth. Verse six, heard and understood the grace of God in truth.

When Paul speaks about the gospel as a reality, here's the most defining reality about the gospel. It's true. It's true. It's not false. It's not a philosophy.

It's not a pick-me-up motivational message. It is truth rooted in the reality of what God has done in Christ. What's the acid test of the truth of the gospel?

You heard it and understood the grace of God in truth. Here's how you know you've understood the truth of the gospel. If you understand grace. If you understand that there's nothing you have done to deserve this.

There's nothing you've done to contribute to your salvation. It's all been done for you in Christ. We didn't earn it. We didn't deserve it. We didn't merit it.

[26:48] It was freely giving. Salvation from beginning to end is all God's doing and not our own. And the reason that matters is if it's all of God, we can trust our whole lives all to God.

But Paul doesn't just linger on the truth of the gospel. Look, he lingers as well on the power of the gospel. As indeed the whole world, the gospel is bearing fruit and increasing.

So when Paul wrote this, he says to the Colossian Christians, do you realize that across the whole Mediterranean, as this gospel goes forth, people are being saved and transformed, as it's done in Paul's own life, and as it's doing all over the Mediterranean world.

And then he says to them, as it also does among you, the gospel powerfully works among God's people. The evidence that the gospel is true and that God is truly gracious and good is that he saves and sanctifies sinners.

I remember doing a Christianity Explored course. It was one of those really fascinating times in my life. I was a young, I thought I was a believer, 17. And in the room there was some successful, outwardly looking business men and women.

[28:07] There was a couple of what you'd call roads and there was myself. And in the meeting in the Christianity Explored course on the session on grace, I remember one of the successful businessmen saying, I contribute to my salvation.

And I remember one of the guys who lived quite a rebellious life saying, we can't contribute anything. Salvation is all of God's doing. And I thought about it for a moment.

And I honestly thought that maybe I did contribute something. Maybe God was going to accept me on the basis of the fact that I was trying to live for him. And then it hit me.

I have done nothing. Christ Jesus has done everything. And this is what changed it all. The moment that night where I said, I believe.

The message of the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. And that night I stepped from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his glorious light.

[29:22] The message of Christ crucified and risen from the dead is life-changing. It is world-transforming. You go home tonight and you'll turn on the news and you'll see that there is war now in Iran.

But you go across Europe right now and in every refugee camp and in all these migrants who are moving across Europe, the fastest growing church is among the Farsi speakers.

The fastest growing church, ethnicity in Europe right now, are Iranians. The gospel is powerfully at work. It doesn't require human cleverness.

It doesn't require us adding to it. It's all of God's doing. As Paul gives them confidence in the message, he gives them confidence in the messenger. Notice what he says in verse 7.

Just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

[30:22] Paul gives them confidence in God's work in their lives. He gives them confidence in God's work in the world and in Colossae. And then he says, listen, have confidence in the man who ministers to you.

Have confidence in Epaphras. And why is he a faithful servant? Why is he a faithful minister?

Because he ministers on your behalf. His motivation is the people of God and he does it for the glory of God.

So we've looked at gospel identity. We've looked at gospel realities. Now very briefly, let's just look at gospel maturity. Having grounded these Colossian Christians of who they are, of what Christ is doing, Paul now prays.

And so from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you. And what has Paul been asking? That you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

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.

[31:37] May you be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy. Do you hear the language there? Filled, all, every, fully, abounding.

It's overflowing, comprehensive, total language. If you want maturity in the Christian life, do you know where fullness is found?

In Christ. So what does Paul pray for them? That they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Question. When you think of God's will, what do you think of? We primarily think of God's will in relation to ourselves.

What's God's will for my life? For my family? For my church? When Paul speaks of God's will as we're going to see tomorrow, he's thinking about God's, he's thinking about his cosmic grand will that he wants to reconcile all things in heaven and on earth to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[32:51] Paul prays that these Christians would know more of the will of God because when you know what God has done for us in Christ, what's the result?

So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him. You know, the knowledge he's speaking about is not the knowledge of facts, it's the knowledge of a living, experiential relationship. When you know God, when you know God's heart and God's plans and purposes, you know what pleases him. and those of us in Christ, we know that Christ is the cosmic creator of the world, the sustainer of the world, he's the savior of the world, he's at work in the world by his spirit, and he is going to make all things new for all eternity.

What should that do for us? We should change our priorities. It should change how we live in our relationships. It should change how we respond to trials. It should change how we respond in joy. It should change how we live in a life of service. We want to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

[34:13] But here's what Paul says, as we do so, fully pleasing to him, that is, with his smile upon us, and bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

You know what's really fascinating? Many Christians today think maturity is found in experience, excitement, in liveliness.

And it's very clear for the Apostle Paul that gospel maturity is seen in the ordinariness of life. Look at this, right? Verse 11. Being strengthened with all power according to God's glorious might.

Now if you wanted the whole power of God, what would you want it for? You'd say the salvation of the lost. You'd say for your battle against sin. You'd say for dramatic displays of God's power on

earth.

Paul says, I pray that you'd be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might. What for? For all endurance in the Christian life. For all patience in the Christian life with joy.

[35:24] You see, the reality is here's the moments where you and I are most tempted to doubt Christ's efficiency. It's as we're called to live a life before the face of God day in, day out.

And our temptation is we want to rely on self. Our temptation is we're drawn apart, to look for identity apart from Christ, to look for our satisfaction and fullness outside of Christ.

Paul says, we need the power of God to endure with patience and joy, living in dependence upon Christ as his people.

God's power is given so that we can endure. God's power is given for staying. God's power is given so that he can display it in our weakness, in our suffering.

And don't miss this. Paul goes on to say in the next verse, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in his inheritance.

[36:40] And there is one more time, all the saints in light, who are Christians, they're saints. 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.

Do you know the mature Christian has come to discover they're no longer trying to qualify themselves for heaven because you can. The mature Christian gives thanks to the Father because he realized, wait a minute, I'm qualified, I'm delivered, I'm transferred, I'm redeemed, I'm forgiven. Who are we in Christ? We're saints. We're faithful brothers and sisters. we're those who have been led into the kingdom of the Son of God.

And here's the great news of the gospel. If the Father has qualified you for the inheritance, he will sustain you. If he's rescued you from darkness, he will strengthen you.

If he's forgiven you in Christ, he will finish the good work he's begun in you. If we go back to the start and think of those brothers, they had in relationship with their mum the most unbelievable inheritance, but they did not know it because they did not enjoy or take the time to enjoy more fully all of their mum.

[38:25] I hope that this I hope this weekend we'll come to discover something of the blessings that are ours in Christ. And if you're not yet in Christ, if you're looking for identity, meaning, and purpose, and satisfaction, you'll not find it in this world.

You'll find it in Christ and in Christ alone. Let's pray. Our Father, Thank you.