

LifeGroups

GROWING TOGETHER IN THE GOSPEL

Growth Sheet

Giving Thanks to the Father

Colossians 1:12-14

Review: The Theme of Colossians

Paul wrote to the Colossians to tell them that true spiritual maturity is found in Christ alone. But merely knowing this does not automatically make a person spiritually mature. This is why Paul goes on to urge the Colossians, “As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk in him*” (2:6-7). Walking in Christ means guarding against anything that would draw us away from him (2:8-23). It means radical rearranging our priorities (3:1-4), virtues (3:5-11), and relationships (3:12-4:6)—all because of who Jesus is and what he has done for us (1:15-23).

Up to this point in our series through Colossians, we have looked at Paul’s opening greeting (1:1-2), and his prayer report (1:3-23). In this prayer, he expresses his gratitude that the Colossian believers are beginning to bud into maturity (1:3-8), and his desire that they would be filled with the knowledge of God’s will so that they might walk worthy of the Lord (1:9-12).

Gratitude: A Mark of Maturity

True gratitude is a rare quality because it goes against our nature. We like to feel that others are in our debt. Gratitude, however, acknowledges that we are indebted to someone else. Furthermore, gratitude acknowledges this indebtedness gladly, not grudgingly.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul presents gratitude as a mark of genuine spiritual maturity (see Colossians 1:9-12). Gratitude is such an important theme throughout Colossians that we find it in other key places throughout the letter (2:6-7; 3:15-17; and 4:2). In our text (1:12-14), Paul explains why the Colossians should be so grateful: God has done something for them that they did not deserve, desperately needed, and could not earn: God has made them *his people*.

Gratitude for a New Exodus

But how did God make them his people? In this text, Paul chose words that remind us of one of the most pivotal events in the Old Testament: the *exodus*. The exodus is the story of how God rescued the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt (Exodus 1-15). Then God entered into a solemn promise with them and made them his very own people (Deuteronomy 7:6).

With this event as the backdrop, Paul’s point becomes even clearer: Through Christ, God is bringing about a *new exodus* and creating a *new people*—not for the nation of Israel alone (see 3:11) but for anyone who believes in Christ. Instead of Egypt, the place of captivity was “the domain of darkness” (1:13). Instead of the Promised Land, the destiny is “the kingdom of his beloved



Son.” And instead of the blood of a lamb, the redemption price was the death of the Son of God (1:14).

The text names three actions that God has accomplished for those who believe in Christ: he has qualified, rescued, and redeemed us. These are the reasons God’s people can be deeply grateful.

1. **Qualified:** “He has *qualified* you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light” (1:12).
2. **Rescued:** “He has *delivered* us from the domain of darkness and *transferred* us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (1:13).
3. **Redeemed:** “In whom we have *redemption*, the forgiveness of sins” (1:14).

Discussion and Application

1. How would you define gratitude? When have you seen genuine gratitude? When have you seen insincere gratitude?
2. Gratitude is a key theme in Colossians. Besides 1:12, it is mentioned in three other places: 2:6-7; 3:15-17; and 4:2. Read these passages. Why do you think gratitude is an essential mark of maturity? What does ingratitude tell us about a person?
3. It is important to observe that gratitude *by itself* is not a mark of maturity. After all, an immature person can be grateful for trivial things and overlook the things that truly matter. Name some things an immature person can be sincerely grateful for. How are these things different from the things for which a mature person gives thanks for, especially as discussed in Colossians 1:12-14?
4. Paul writes that God rescues people from the “domain of darkness” (1:13). Why is “the domain of darkness” a fitting description of the realm from which people can be rescued? In other words, what is true about life apart from God that makes it so “dark”?
5. Colossians 1:14 says that redemption is to be found in God’s beloved Son, that is, Jesus Christ. What did Jesus do for us to achieve this redemption? What does this tell us about how costly it was? What does it tell us about how much God loves people?
6. Forgiveness comes only through faith in Jesus Christ (1:14). Therefore, those who believe in him have the greatest reasons to be grateful. What are some practical ways we can express our gratitude to God?