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A WORD FROM THE GLOW STAFF

Glow in the Dark™ is passionate about helping you know and pursue Jesus Christ above everything else in your life. We are committed to publishing material that is focused on exalting Christ through the study of His revealed, written Word. We believe that Christian teens truly desire to know and understand God's Word. However, many who read God's Word quickly become intimidated, discouraged, or lack the tools to grow. This study will guide you through Scripture so you understand what God is saying, and learn how to read the Bible for yourself.

To accomplish these goals, you will walk through the Bible piece by piece (chapters, paragraphs, verses, words). It is important that you let Scripture communicate for itself. This will take time and dedication, but you cannot mature your faith unless you earnestly seek God's Word and let it impact your life!

A GUIDE *to* STUDYING SCRIPTURE

Anyone taking a journey or expedition must at some point **embark**.

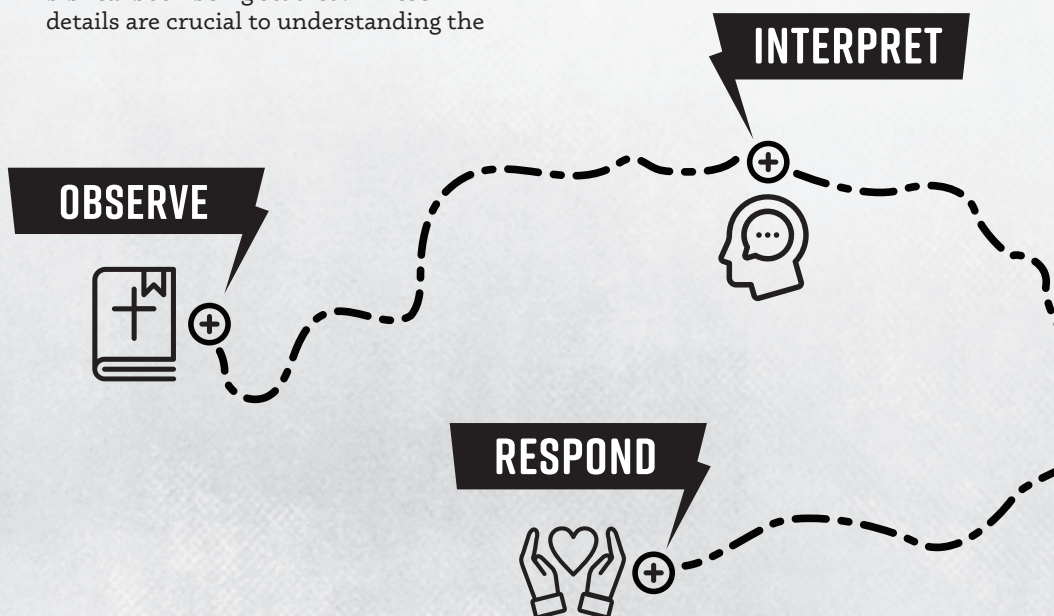
It is not enough to know that adventure and progress lie ahead. You must begin; you must embark!

This series is meant to help you get started on this incredible journey of growing in Christ through Bible reading and study. Understanding the tools and skills necessary for this adventure will prepare you for a life-long process of knowing and pursuing Jesus Christ through His Word.

Any journey you take must have a map. Each Embark book begins by looking at the background and context of the biblical book being studied. These details are crucial to understanding the

overall message of the biblical book and they help you see the course charted through the daily studies. Because of this, each study begins by focusing on a passage of Scripture. Over time, as you grow in the Word, you will find Bible study to be an exciting and joyful part of your spiritual journey.

When your course has been charted, there are also directions or steps that need to be followed. Although we do not take time in each daily study to highlight these steps, our goal is to model them. As you grow in God's Word, you will form right and healthy study habits. What is important at this point is to understand what these steps are and in what order you must follow them. As you study, spend time in prayer and depend on the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and teach you.





OBSERVATION

This first step begins with what the text says. As you read a section of Scripture, observation seeks to answer the questions, "What does the text say?" and "What do I see?" At this step, the main concern is content, context, and facts.^[i] Observation also answers the simple questions of *who*, *what*, *when*, *where* and *how*? These observations are necessary to move in the right direction!



INTERPRETATION

This second step helps us understand to whom the text was written and why. This step does not focus first on us, but on them and then (to whom the book was written and what was going on when it was written.) In order to be confident that our understanding of the text is right, it is crucial that we remember that God's Word was first given to an original audience for a particular reason. Proper interpretation answers the questions, "What truth is being communicated to the original readers?" and "What is the meaning of this text?"



RESPONSE

This last step ends with how God's Word will impact you today. Ultimately, the end of this journey is worship. For this reason, while you may be most familiar with the word "application," we have chosen to use the word "response." Some passages of Scripture include imperatives (commands to follow). However, every passage first draws our attention to God as great or man as needy and dependent on God. Because of this, we believe it is more helpful to consider how each text is calling us to respond by faith in worship. Worship will be seen in a life lived for God's glory.^[iii]

*Embark with us on this
spectacular journey
through God's Word!*



*Where false teaching
distracted from Christ,
Paul left no doubt that
Christ is enough.*

COLOSSIANS:

JESUS CHRIST IS SUPREME

What Kind of Literature Is This?

A New Testament epistle is a unique and special part of Scripture. An epistle is a personal letter, written by the inspiration of God, to specific believers. Some epistles are addressed to only one person (Ex. Philemon or Timothy), while some of the letters are addressed to one or more churches - like Colossians. These letters were written to address specific spiritual needs, and their truth is still applicable to us today. Second Timothy 3:16 reminds us that all of God's Word is given to us for our doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction because we need the same truths as the original readers.

New Testament epistles are usually shorter and were intended to be read all the way through in one sitting (like you normally would read a letter). It will take an average reader thirteen minutes to read all of Colossians. If you are able to take the time each day, I encourage you to read through the entirety of Colossians in one sitting.

This will help you to understand and remember the Spirit-breathed details being studied, and it will etch God's Word into your life. Never tire of reading Scripture!

What Is This Book all about?

Paul wrote the letter of Colossians specifically to refute the false teachings being spread among the believers. Paul wrote this letter to a church in the town of Colossae to provide his fellow Christians with an unparalleled look at Jesus Christ. Where false teaching distracted from Christ, Paul left no doubt that Christ is enough.

Chapters 1-2 are focused on knowing Christ as the preeminent image of God. The Christ theology (Christology) of chapters 1-2 is then applied to everyday life in the second half of the letter (3-4). This message is just as powerful and applicable to us today.

MAPPING *the* EXPEDITION

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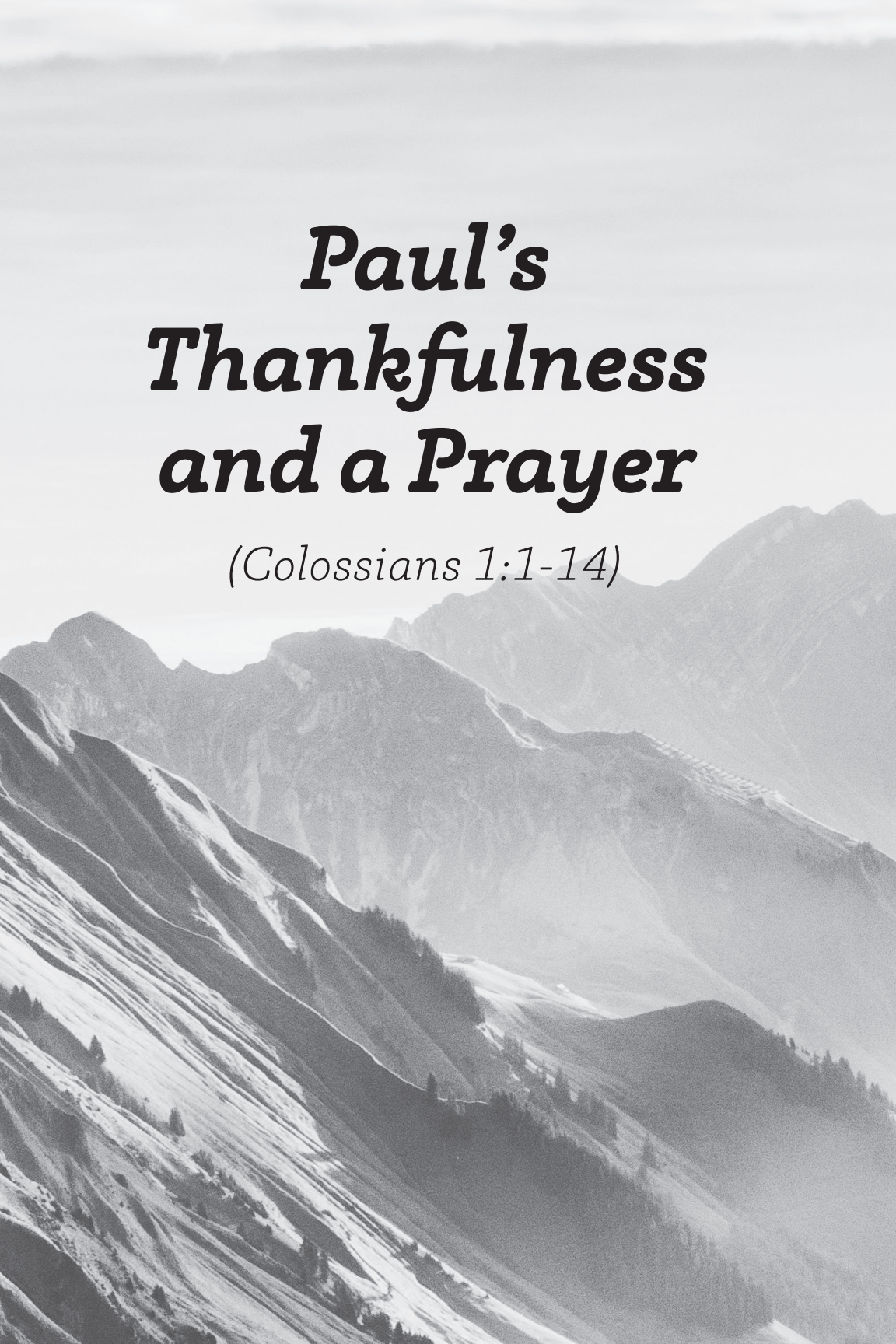
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A black and white photograph of a mountain range. The foreground shows a sharp, rocky peak with some snow or light-colored rock patches. The middle ground features a series of jagged mountain ridges receding into the distance. The background is a hazy, overcast sky. A dark, patterned banner is positioned at the top of the image, containing the text "STUDIES 1-4" in white, uppercase letters.

STUDIES 1-4



***Paul's
Thankfulness
and a Prayer***

(Colossians 1:1-14)



Paul Thanking God for these Believers

Read Colossians 1:1-14 for context.

The letter of Colossians was written to Christians with a great reputation but with spiritual needs. The writer is the Apostle Paul but he has never actually met these believers in person (2:1). Instead, he hears of them through others and gives powerful, godly, life-transforming truth that is relevant to believers he has never met. He desires to see them personally, and he desires to help them refocus on Jesus Christ. They are potentially distracted from the core of their faith.

Read Colossians 1:1-2

Paul introduces himself and sends his customary greeting to his fellow believers: “Grace and peace from God...”

Paul’s introduction of himself as an apostle “by the will of God” emphasizes to these Christians his authority but it is not a position he has sought for himself. Instead, we realize this apostleship was specifically given by God to Paul. He was chosen to help guide the early church after Christ ascended into heaven.

This entire letter is based on the foundation of a saving faith in Christ. He shows this by referring to these believers as “saints and faithful brethren.” Do you have this saving faith? How do you know? **The answers will vary, but we are hoping for a YES and then a description. The student’s description will hopefully show an understanding of God’s holiness, their sinfulness, Jesus Christ’s death on the cross for sin, and their faith in Him.**

While on one level, Paul was simply a Christian brother to these people; they needed to understand this was not just any other letter. Instead, this letter came with God’s full authority and would be spiritually enriching to them. Take a moment to pray and thank God that He has spoken to us and also ask that, as you study Colossians, you would follow God’s Word. What did you pray? **Various answers expected.**

Let's go back to the greeting of grace and peace. Paul effectively reminds us that the source of empowering grace, and the giver of peace, is God. Paul's greeting is more than just an introduction and surely stands as the foundation for this entire letter. What are some people tempted to look to for empowerment other than Christ? **Various answers; possible examples: popularity, friends, money, grades, sports, success, drugs, relationships, family, etc.**

Read Colossians 1:3-5

Paul's Christ-like love has made him a very positive person. He begins this letter excited and thanking God for the reputation these believers have.

Their **faith** in Christ Jesus - this is the foundation of their unity with God and their connection to Paul. This faith is key in Colossians (see 3:1). Write about when you put your faith in Jesus Christ: **This should be a description of the time they understood the gospel and put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.**

Their **love** for fellow Christians - This was an obvious care for each other that flows from their connection in Jesus Christ. Your faith in Christ is often seen in love for fellow Christians.

Their **hope** in heaven - more than anything else in life, these believers were looking forward to their home in heaven. What do you look forward to in life? **Various answers; getting married, graduating highschool, retirement, becoming wealthy, vacation, etc.**

Have you ever met someone who was obviously looking forward to heaven? If you did, how could you tell? **Various answers; talking about heaven, reminding others of god's promised home in heaven, not fixating on earthly/physical things, etc.**

The life of an early Christian was not always easy. In fact, the Apostle Paul, before his conversion, was known for persecuting, imprisoning, and killing any Christian he could find. Why do you think these believers were looking forward to heaven? **They would be with their savior, it was perfect, there would be no more persecution, etc.**

Why can you also look forward to heaven? **Similar answers to previous question.**

2

The Fruit of God's Grace

Read Colossians 1:1-14 for context.

Paul is thankful for God's grace working in these believer's lives. He communicates some helpful truths for them to understand about God's working within them. Let's take a look at what this passage has to say.

Read Colossians 1:5-6

These believers lives were transformed by the powerful truth of the Gospel. Paul will speak more of the Gospel later in this letter, but for now, read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (especially verses 3-4). Do you know what the Gospel is? What are the main pieces of this Good News (Gospel) that we find in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4?

1. Christ died for our sins
2. Christ was buried
3. Christ rise again

If you don't understand what the Gospel is, I encourage you to talk with your pastor or a spiritual leader right now!

This powerful Gospel message is not just working inside Colossae. Where does verse 6 say it's working? **It's working in all the world.**

Also, wherever the Gospel is working, we are reminded there will be fruit appearing. This is a picturesque way of thinking about the spiritual growth which should be happening in the life of a Christian. There are many beautiful fruits that will begin to appear in a person's life. Galatians 5:22-23 lists a few of them. Can you see spiritual fruit in your life? **Yes or No Answer** (Paul said fruit was obvious in the Colossian believers.) What spiritual fruit do you see in your own life? **Various answers; These answers should focus on personal Gospel fruit and the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).**

Equally amazing as the evidence of this fruit is the continual growth of this fruit. Look at the end of verse 6...do you see where it says this fruit has been growing "since" you received the grace of God? What an amazing work God has been doing inside His people! How incredible is it that God has a growth process happening in every single one of His children? The growth process for these Christians at Colossae had not stopped since the day they understood the grace of God. Wonderful!

Something to think about: this growth is not promised to be instantaneous, but it has been continually happening. Think about this growth for a moment...

- There may be a few reasons I am unsuccessful in growing plants such as ineptness or a lack of concern for my plants. However, wouldn't you agree God is not inept or uncaring? He has promised growth in the Gospel, and it will happen. It is impossible to stop God's plan to produce fruit in a believer's life. Have you ever considered that? However, what could be some factors that slow or limit your spiritual growth? **Various answers; unconfessed sin, no time in God's word, not in church, no prayer time, walking in the flesh, pursuing you own desires, etc.**
- How are you participating in this growth process? **Various answers; spending time with God - prayer, Bible reading, church; seeking out spiritual mentors, walking in the Spirit, etc.**
- What dependable promise do we find in Philippians 1:6? **God will always complete the good work He has begun.**

Read Colossians 1:7-8

Epaphras was a spiritual leader (and probably their pastor; see also Col. 4:12-13) who understood the Colossians' love and was teaching them about God. The defining characteristic of his relationship with these believers was as a "faithful minister of Christ." Paul speaks highly of this man because Epaphras desires to direct people towards Christ. Compare this with 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. What should be the focus for a spiritual leader? **Faithfully pointing people towards Jesus Christ, the Gospel, and God's Word. Not focused on self-promotion, pride, or their own opinions, etc.**

The Greek word used, "σύνδουλος" (sundoulos; fellow-servant), carries the idea that he is bound to this mission. Epaphras is captivated to teaching about Christ, and he brought good news to Paul about these believers. They had a noticeable "love in the Spirit."

Would a spiritual mentor talk about your reputation for faith? **Yes or No**

What would it take to get this type of godly reputation? **Faithfully living for Christ so that others see your love for God.**

If friends were to describe your spiritual reputation, what would they say? **Various answers**



Paul's Prayer for these Believers

Read Colossians 1:1-14 for context.

Read Colossians 1:9-11

Paul even says he prays for them. How much does he pray for them? **Without ceasing (constantly).**

What do you see in the verses before this that causes Paul to pray for these people? **Their faith in Jesus Christ, their spiritual growth, the continued spread of the Gospel, etc.**

Paul prays four specific things for these believers. This prayer has relevant requests that apply to every believer (including you and your Christian friends). We will consider three today. First, he prays for growth in the knowledge of God, which he applies in two specific spiritual areas...

- “Understanding” – a knowledge that can only come from God and from time spent in His Word, the Bible (Col. 3:16).
- “Wisdom” – the ability to know how to live (use knowledge).

How do you become “filled with [this] knowledge?” **Spending time in God's Word, memorizing it, listening to preaching, reading good books, etc.**

Are you pursuing it? How? **Various answers**

Next, “Walk **worthy** of the Lord.” Paul desires these believers would live to honor Christ in all they do. In fact, Paul even explains to us that God receives pleasure when His people walk worthy. Consider for a moment: is it appropriate for God to expect His creation to give Him pleasure? Why? **Yes, He created us and oversees His creation. God is the only One worthy of worship. This worship provides Him pleasure .**

Is Christ “worthy” of your following? List the top three reasons you can think of that make Him worthy of following? **Various answers; examples: He saved me, He created me, He loves me, He is perfect, He is wise, etc.**

Is your life characterized by good works and fruitfulness? Where? **Various answers; in relationships with family, in sharing the Gospel, in my service with my church, in serving our community, etc.**

New life in Christ enables a fruitful life of service!

Finally, Paul then prays they would be “**strengthened** with all **might**.” Is this “might” something you must manufacture yourself? **No**

Verse 11 says it comes from where? **His (God's) glorious power.**

This is an astounding, enlivening prayer request that balances the sobering call to “walk worthy.” If you are like me, there can be a disconnect between my *desire* to walk worthy and *actually* walking worthy. What do I mean? Well, it would be incredibly disheartening to receive an instruction or command to follow if I knew there was absolutely NO chance of success. Have you ever stepped back and honestly evaluated your behavior? If you look honestly, I am sure you will find that failures abound. Yet, Christ is worth so much more! Have you ever felt like a hopeless failure in your spiritual life? **Yes** Describe the most recent example. **Various answers; in a group setting you may choose not to publicly discuss the answers to this question, or perhaps ask if there is anyone willing to appropriately share what they wrote.** This example is not intended to demoralize or depress you, but simply to prepare you for the beautiful news of God! You see, if a person tries to obey God on his own, the results are always dreadful. However, we have God’s gracious gift of empowering grace!

- How much power does Christ actually have? Do you realize this power is working to transform you (See Romans 8:11)? What are some examples of God’s power? **Raising Christ from the dead; creating the world; parting the Red Sea; etc.**
- Do you realize you are unable to change yourself? **Yes** Knowing this, Paul prays Christ would strengthen you to be able to do what you cannot do on your own.

Repeatedly in the Bible, we see God emphasize His empowering inside us as we strive to walk worthy of Him. Take the next few minutes to simply read and rejoice in these passages which show the beautiful balance between commanded obedience and Divine empowerment. (Please do not skip these verses!)

- 1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 3:5; Philippians 2:12-13

Paul, as he prays, understands these balancing truths for a believer. The Christian must walk worthy, empowered by God.

At the end of verse 11, this God-empowered obedience culminates in two overlapping descriptors:

- **“Patience and longsuffering with joyfulness”** Those who know Christ are able to respond to the events of life with steadiness and calmness because of the power of their God. Would this describe you? **Yes or No**



Paul Thanking God for Salvation

Read Colossians 1:1-14 for context.

Finally, as Paul finishes his prayer, we see him thanking God. With all that Christ has done and is going to do in the life of His followers, Paul feels it is fitting to say “thank you” to Jesus Christ for this special, undeserved relationship.

Read Colossians 1:12

It is difficult to have a time of prayer to this gracious God without thankfulness: but consider specifically what Paul says thank you for. What does Paul thank God for in verse 12? **Made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (salvation).**

Warren Wiersbe (a Bible commentator) has this to say about our thankfulness, “Of course, the one blessing that ought to move us constantly to thanksgiving is that God has made us ‘meet [fit] ...’”^[iii] Why should God’s working in us for this gift be a constant motivation for thankfulness? **This shows us that we can only be saved and sanctified by God’s grace and His working within us. That our holy God would choose to work salvation in broken sinners should cause us to say thank you for the privilege of salvation!**

What did He enable us to take part in? “Partakers of the **inheritance of the saints** in light.” What is an inheritance? **A precious gift from a parent given to children usually given after the parent dies.**

Did you work for or earn this inheritance? **No**

This spiritual inheritance reminds us of God’s work through out the Old Testament to give Israel its inheritance of the Promised Land. This physical inheritance of Israel works as a beautiful picture of the New Testament believer’s inheritance of the kingdom of “light.” The Israelites followed God’s leading through the wilderness to their new home. Throughout the entire journey, God was working in them as His special people, and here in Colossians, Paul is giving thanks for the same events in the lives of “us.”

Read Colossians 1:13

But Paul doesn’t simply say “God, thank you for saving me. Amen!” and then walk away to think about something else. Instead, we see him spend time meditating on and then thanking God for each aspect of salvation.

What is “the power of darkness” that a Christian has been delivered from? (Read also Ephesians 6:12.) **The power of sin, the kingdom of satan, etc.**

- Note: This is the polar opposite of the “inheritance of...light” that believers have been given. Paul desires us to see the sharp contrast between light and darkness.

God delivers from darkness and also transports His people into the kingdom of His Son Jesus Christ. The old citizenship is removed, and a new citizenship is given. Do you see any similarity with Acts 26:18? What? **God opens peoples eyes, turns them from darkness to light, from the power of satan to God, an inheritance for those who are saved (justified and sanctified).**

Is there anything that Acts 26:18 says differently? **It adds the specific phrases about the power of satan, the forgiveness of sin, and faith in God.**

Read Colossians 1:14

What does the word “redemption” (redeemed) mean? **“To buy back” often used for the payment of a ransom, or for a slave.**

Paul revels in the beautiful absurdity of salvation (while praying) because he clearly understands forgiveness and deliverance are not deserved. As you contemplate the distance between sinful man and the perfect Son of God, it should move you to thankfulness!

Have you ever known someone who was a grateful new citizen of your country? Or, perhaps someone who was adopted into a loving new family? **Yes or No; various answers**

What would it mean to be rescued and made worthy of being part of a prestigious kingdom, leaving dreariness and darkness behind and walking into the sunlight of freedom? **Various answers; it would bring a feeling of freedom, joy, thankfulness; it would give opportunity and status that was impossible before; etc.**

This is something to be thankful for. What a way to pray!

Take time to pray this for yourself and two Christian friends. The four pieces of your prayer are to:

- Grow in the knowledge of God
- Walk worthy of the Lord
- Be strengthened with God’s powerful might
- Thank God for the stunning gift of salvation

Who did you pray for? **Various answers**

Now, make sure to tell your friends about your prayer for them the next time that you see each other. Like Paul, this is an opportunity for you to be a wonderful spiritual encouragement to some fellow believers!



The church at Colossae was in deep trouble. People were encouraging these believers to move beyond Christ. The Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians faces this heresy head-on and teaches Christians to find their sufficiency in Christ alone. Spiritual maturity only occurs as we worship Jesus Christ as supreme.

OBSERVE



INTERPRET



RESPOND



A GUIDE TO STUDYING SCRIPTURE

The Embark series is designed to help you engage in Bible study by taking an in-depth look at Scripture. It is our desire to encourage a complete journey through the context of Bible books and passages. We passionately believe this will help readers mature spiritually. It is vital for believers to meditate on the depth and beauty of the knowledge of God.

The Embark Series Is Produced by
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