

*You've Got Mail: A Journey Through A Few of Paul's Letters*  
**HOLY (Or JOLLY) – A Letter to the Church in Colossae**  
 Message for July 28, 2019  
 North East United Methodist Church  
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Colossians 1: 9-14 (NKJV) - *“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”*

Wow! *“...qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”*

*“...delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love...”*

In these verses near the beginning of his letter to Colossians, Paul lists five benefits God gives all believers through Christ:

- (1) God made us qualified to share His inheritance;
- (2) God delivered us from Satan's dominion of darkness and made us His children;
- (3) God brought us into His eternal kingdom;
- (4) God redeemed us – bought our freedom from sin and judgment; and
- (5) When we believe, God forgives all our sins through Jesus Christ.

God qualifies us *“to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light”*

God's gifts to us should literally take our breath away...make us stand in awe...in utter amazement and joy...

Ronald Newhouse writes, *“There's nothing more contradictory than an unenthusiastic Christian. The Bible tells us that God loves us so much, in fact, that God gave his only son so that all who believe in him will have everlasting life. Nothing not even death can separate us from God's love! If we really believe that, we can't help but overflow with joy!”*

Paul goes on – Colossians 2: 13-14 (NKJV) – *“You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.”*



In Christ, we have been made Holy... a fact reiterated throughout scripture...

Hebrews 10:10 (NLT) - *“For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.”*

God says through the prophet Isaiah 43:25 (NLT) – *“I—yes, I alone—will blot out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again”...*

Louis Evely once said, *“When you have become penetrated with the joy of God, all of your sorrows will turn into joy, all of your trials will be graces; you will recognize your faults, you will be sorry for them, and they will be forgiven so that they may become happy faults. They will remind you only of the goodness, the tenderness, the joy with which God forgives them.”*

Made Holy that we might stand before a Holy God – *“partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light”...*

Paul reiterates this in Colossians 1:21-22 (NKJV) – ***“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight”***

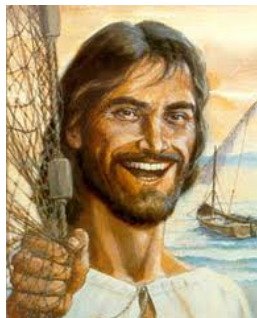
Such knowledge should bring joy to our hearts, a smile to our lips, and a skip in our step. Such knowledge should carry us through tragedy and heartache, through moments of stress and worry. Such knowledge should change the way we view the world, our neighbors, our purpose. Such knowledge should transform us!



When was the last time you laughed for the sheer joy of your salvation? People are not attracted to somber doctrines. There is no persuasive power in a gloomy and morbid religion. Let the world see your joy and you won't be able to keep them away. To be filled with God is to be filled with joy.

I was reminded of a column that Erma Bombeck wrote, *“In church the other Sunday I was intent on a small child who was turning around smiling at everyone. He wasn't gurgling, spitting,*

*humming, kicking, tearing the hymnals, or rummaging through his mother's handbag. He was just smiling. Finally, his mother jerked him about and in a stage whisper that could be heard in a little theatre off Broadway said, "Stop grinning! You're in church!" With that, she gave him a belt and as tears rolled down his cheeks added, "That's better," and returned to her prayers...Suddenly I was angry. I occurred to me the entire world is in tears, and if you're not, then you'd better get with it. I wanted to grab this child with the tear-stained face close to me and tell him about my God. The happy God. The smiling God...*



*...The God who had to have a sense of humor to have created the likes of us...By tradition, one wears faith with the solemnity of a mourner, the gravity of a mask of tragedy, and the dedication of a Rotary badge. What a fool, I thought. Here was a woman sitting next to the only light left in our civilization – the only hope, our only miracle – our only promise of infinity. If he couldn't smile in church, where was there left to go?"*

The psalmist sings, Psalm 122:1 (The Message) – *"When they said, "Let's go to the house of GOD," my heart leaped for joy."*

Paul writes in Philippians 4:4 (NLT) – *"Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!"*

How could Paul have such joy? How could one who had been through so much more than any of us have suffered...had been beaten with rods, shipwrecked, stoned, received thirty-nine lashes, went hungry, slept outside in the cold, had friends betray him and his Jewish brothers want to kill him...How could Paul have such joy?

It was because Paul knew two things...

First, Paul knew he was a sinner...



Paul writes in Romans 7: 22-24 (NLT) – ***“I love God’s law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?”***

Secondly, Paul knew about grace...



...Paul understood who Christ was and what Christ had done...



Considered by many to be one of the early hymns of the Christian church - Colossians 1: 15-20 (NLT) – ***“Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can’t see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything. For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross.”***

Paul knew what the writer of the hymn, “Amazing Grace,” understood, ***“Although my memory’s fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior”*** – John Newton

How often I forget? How often do I let the world drown out these two great truths?

Paul accepted the God’s gift of His Son...



Paul knew what this gift meant and his heart was filled with the joy of his salvation...

C.S. Lewis wrote, ***“Grace substitutes a full, childlike and delighted acceptance of our Need, a joy in total dependence. We become ‘jolly beggars.’”***

Philip Yancey comments on C.S. Lewis’ words, *“We creatures, we jolly beggars, give glory to God by our dependence. Our wounds and defects are the very fissures through which grace might pass. It is our human destiny on earth to be imperfect, incomplete, weak, and mortal, and only by accepting that destiny can we escape the force of gravity and receive grace. Only then can we grow close to God. Strangely, God is closer to sinners than to ‘saints.’ (By saints I mean those people renowned for their piety – True saints never lose sight of their sinfulness.) As one lecturer in spirituality explains it, ‘God in heaven holds each person by a string. When you sin, you cut the string. Then God ties it up again, making a knot – and thereby bringing you a little closer to Him. Again and again your sins cut the string – and with each further knot God keeps drawing you closer and closer.’”*

How do we react to such a gift?

Paul says, Colossians 3:12-15 (NLT) – ***“Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.”***

And then in verses 16-17 – ***“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”***

*“...to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light”* – WOW! Let us focus on Jesus Christ, thinking of this gift from God to each of us every day. May such knowledge truly take our breath away, transforming our lives!

*“God chose you to be the holy people he loves...”* WOW!