

W346_Colossians_6.mp3

[00:00:02] This is a recording made in the Chapel of the Open Book and is number six of the series dealing with the epistle to the Colossians. We have been looking not only at the Epistle as a whole about at a good part of chapter one. We saw how the apostle had prayed for them and how he reveals the basis of their hopes. Now, before we go further into this chapter, there is awaiting us. The section beginning with verse 23.

There is one feature that I think needs to be lifted out and dealt with as a special subject. There's always the danger that we can be so taken up with the blessings and the doctrines. And the things that have to do with our high calling as to forget that there is a correspondence in the scriptures between our calling and our walk, our manner of life. And there are some people who are rather irksome. They feel, or we don't harp on that. Just tell us all the wonderful blessings and the rest will take care of itself. Well, it may do. But you must remember also especially. In some companies that unless you can exhibit and make it clear that you are as equally concerned. For the walk that's worthy as well as for the calling, which is by grace. Are there. Some may be shy of it. The God has made us bipeds. We, some of us have to walk with one leg and a half now, but that's not normal.

[00:01:50] We should walk with two. And if they are both equal, then our walk will be. Normal. If either of them are shortened or distorted, our work will suffer. What I want to ask you to look at two features in this epistle to the Colossians and to see that while it is stressed without reserve that our blessings are gifts that are not merited and they cannot be forfeited. Yet there is associated with those gifts something which is addressed to our own response. Something that we are called upon to do as a consequence. So will you come back with me in Colossians one and notice the basis upon which we work? Verse 12. We've had all this before, I remind you. He doesn't ask for anything in verse 12, giving thanks. He's thanking God for something which is already a fact. Thanking the Father which hath made us not. Oh, I do hope he will make us. Or possibly one day we shall be good enough to be made. No, he hath made us what meat fit sufficient. Everything required of us is already there in Christ on our account to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints. Not merely an inheritance, but the inheritance that has to do with our holy place and holy people. And it is in the light. And it's a magnificent inheritance, isn't it? And there's no possibility of the thought that

this can be merited by us. We find that? It goes on to say that we've been delivered the same word hath delivered us from the power of darkness.

[00:03:50] I suppose there's nobody with any temerity would say that it's possible that they could deliver themselves from the power of darkness or the authority of darkness. That grip upon us is beyond the power of our liberation, either for ourselves or for others, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the son of his love. And all this is associated with redemption. In whom? We have redemption. Well, now that's the inheritance. There's much to be said for it, that there is the emphasis that is ours in Christ Indefectible. Now, if you turn the page to chapter three, we have another reference to the inheritance. You will see that. Toward the close of Chapter three. He does. What he has done in Ephesians brings the truth of this marvelous calling to bear upon the things of everyday life. Verse 18 Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands love your wives and be not bitter against them. Children obey your parents in all things for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh. Chapter four, Verse one. Masters Give unto your servants that which is just an equal. Knowing that you have also you also have a master in heaven. Now there's the whole range of human society brought into touch and into line with this high calling which speaks of the body of Christ.

[00:05:44] All spiritual blessings in heavenly places, Father, that principalities powers, you see, it's so high and yet it's so homely. There are some oddities that we meet and they may say, well, there's no word for me here. But I very few of us are not catered for in this list. I think you must be either a wife or a husband, a child or a parent, a servant or a master. Now, if you're one of those odd people, you'll never have to have a little epistle written all to yourselves. But most of us have got more than one of these associations that we carry with us through life with change in time. But you see, this is a point for us to remember with those who object to our teaching. I remember many years ago somebody was very strongly criticizing this teaching that it was all up among the stars and all heavenly places and all to do with principalities and powers. We wanted more like brass tacks. You know, people like brass tacks for some reason. So I said to this particular person, Would you let me come home and read that section in Ephesians, which is a much more developed one than this in your presence and in your presence of your wife. Now to search, searching. You see, it isn't true. If you and I are not better

husbands, better wives, better servants, better masters, better children and better parents, there's something radically wrong because this Colossians and this Ephesians is the only part of the New Testament that takes hold of the whole of social system.

[00:07:24] Those three pairs and says, Look, you've got this coding, which places you there? Well, what's it doing down here? So you see, I thought it was wise just to call a halt. Now then we'll go back to the servant. If you will. Leave that for a moment and turn to Titus. I'd like you to see a feature which is important, I think. Titus Chapter two. Verse nine. Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters. So falls on the same subject here and to please them well, in all things. But he doesn't say a word about the Masters. He doesn't say anything about husbands and wives, but he bases all this great teaching at the end of Colossians two on the servants. And they were a they were slaves. They were downtrodden. They were the last ones you might think would be able to manifest the glorious teaching of the mystery of their lives. But he says to them not. Not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity that they may adorn the doctrine of God, our savior in all things. So he uses the servant and says you can lift that service until it's an adornment of the very doctrine that God has given to us. And He goes on to speak about living, looking for that blessed hope.

[00:08:50] Well, there are four verses here in coming back to Colossians three, 22, 23, 24 and 25 devoted to the servant. There's only one to the wife, one to the husband, one to the children, one to the fathers, and one to the masters. So again, he's lifted out the servant class, the ones that are thought least off, and he's given them the onus and the bearer to bear this great truth. So let's go on from verse 22, Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh. So there's no doubt about it. It's their masters, according to the flesh. And I may not always be very nice. Masters doesn't say they are not with eye service. Well, it is a good deal of I service goes on friends. I think if you know anything about modern life, it's clockwatching dodging tremendous amount of dishonesty enters into the make up of people until at last its forms a part of their very outlook of life. And then we invent words to camouflage or we never steal anything. We only scrounge it, we pinch it, we half inch it. We do all sorts of things, just not to say the word. You see. At comes under this grading I service. You take your wages and you look upon the master as an enemy and you do him for all your worth and do as little as possible. That's a terrible thought to think that that may be not a full shut up of some people's attitude to life at this present time.

[00:10:28] Not with eye service as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart fearing God. And would you come to think this was written to a slave? Who didn't belong to a union and could have a lightning strike at any time they liked. Told in their circumstances. Even in those circumstances, they could do it heartily as unto the Lord. Whatsoever. Ye do do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men. Well, what encouragement would they have in the circumstances of their life? Oh, here it comes. Here it comes. What did we read just now about the inheritance? He has made us meet for the inheritance. They doubts nothing we do as merited it. Nothing we do can safeguard it. That's the gift of God. But here the inheritance comes again. Knowing that of the Lord, ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance. Now that's a different aspect. Reward. Has in view faithful service so that you and I have got to distinguish between that which is a gift and that which is merited. Just the same as we come. We turn the page back to Philippians there in Philippians. He said, Not as though I were already perfect. Why? Oh, he says, I've got the prize in view. But aren't you certain of the prize? He said it wouldn't be a prize if I was. If you enter into a contest or a race.

[00:12:01] He can't say oh I'm certainly get it is only be a boasting if you say that you cannot have certainty if it's a prize. So you have to discipline yourself and so run that you may obtain. Now when he wrote his second epistle. It was I not sure. Oh, he says, I've touched the tape. I finished my course. Henceforth, the crown. Oh, yes. He was given to know that at long last, it came. But here we have then the two two passages coming together. You have that inheritance which is yours beyond dreams. And it's indefectible. It's a gift. Now then you have the inheritance in view again. And attached to that inheritance is a reward. We have in Ephesians the hope of the calling. Now that's something you can never merit, something you can never avoid. It's they're an integral part of the calling of God that's given to you. The calling has its hope and you must enter it. But in Philippians it says, There's something else attached to that calling. There's the prize of the high, calling the prize all. You're not so certain about that. The Old Testament says, let not him boast who puts his armor on as he who puts it off. The world says there's many a slip twixt the cup and the lip. And so there's an element of uncertainty with regard to the prize, but there's an element of glorious certainty with regard to the hope of the calling. So now we've got the two in the same epistle.

[00:13:35] He has an inheritance which is yours can never be lost and an inheritance that has a reward attached to it. And the reward you may not get. You say, I don't quite like that idea of missing it. Will you look at chapter two? Colossians two? Verse 18. Let no man the guide you of your reward. Well, that looks as though he knew that some would be beguiled. Others have a watchful. And the word here translated beguile you of your reward is the word Cata Bravo. I'm only mentioning that because you can hear this word. The word prize is a bribe ion. Bribe is the root word of the word prize. And it's in the verb here to judge against you with regard to a contest. And so cheat you of the prize or the reward. So there is a possibility of forfeiting a prize. Blessed be God. There is no possibility of forfeiting. Membership of the body of Christ or salvation by grace. Well, that's one aspect. Now, let's reinforce it by a second one. Colossians one again. Here is a presentation to which we look. Verse 22. Oh, I think we ought to have verse 21 and see what sort of people we were that had us handled and you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works. That was the material God had to work with. Yet now hath he reconciled? How? In the body of his flesh through death.

[00:15:14] So we are back to the Cross of Christ. Nothing we did, nothing that any of our friends could do could reconcile us to God. It's the blood of his cross that makes us nigh. It's the death of Christ that settles our problem with regard to our sin and our forgiveness. And it's in the body of his flesh through death that the next item is coming. This involves the coming into this world of Christ as a babe and growing up to be a man and dying the just for the unjust in the body of his flesh through death. To present you. A presentation to present you. How? Well, if your inheritance is the inheritance of the saints, you know as well as I do that that word saint is the same word that gives us the word Holy. If it's the inheritance of the saints, it says you will be presented Holy. Have you ever made claims to personal holiness? I think we sing with with meaning when we sing that hymn. And every virtue we possess and every victory won and every thought of holiness are his and his alone. And yet this word is used without holiness. No man shall see the Lord. Yet this word is used. So we are going to be presented in exactly the same fitness as that glorious inheritance in the Saints. Presented. Holy. Not only that. But I'm unblamable It's possible that the two words that follow in this verse are only an expansion of the word holy.

[00:17:00] And Blameable and unretrievable. Now the word Unblamable is the word without blemish. Without blemish. And if you were to go back to the book of Leviticus, you would read that a priest, he must be without blemish. It doesn't go into his moral character. This is physical. He mustn't have any superfluous parts. He mustn't have anything missing. He mustn't have anything that's distorted. There mustn't be blocked or spot or blemish. The priests in Israel were perfect specimens of humanity so far as it could be possible in a day in which men are fallen creatures. But that was a picture. Here is the reality. You and I, we make no claims to personal holiness. We never could attain it ourselves. But he who was going to who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints. He's going to present us holy and without blemish. There'd be no possibility of not qualifying. So we've got the temple Temple element here, the priesthood here. And the same word is used of the sacrifices that were used in the worship of God. The sacrifice must be without blemish. And so Christ is set forth as a lamb without blemish. Indeed wonderful to think that that could be written of you and me without blemish in every and any possible way physically, spiritually, morally, mentally, for God has predestinated that those who are believers and justified by grace should be conformed to the image of his son.

[00:18:46] And when they see him, they shall be like him. And Philippians three speaks about the transfiguration of there, the bodies of their humiliation that they may be fashioned like unto his body of glory. Well, there that's one. Now there's another word. Unretrievable. Now, this word gives us the word accusation. It comes in the Acts of the Apostles quite a number of times, and in one particular form it comes in that most glorious passage in Romans, the eighth chapter when after going through chapter by chapter in Romans, you remember speaking of justification, speaking of the grace of God, he comes right out and says, Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? That's this word. Different verbal form, but it's this word and removable. So now you see we've got the Law court of God and we've got the Temple of God. We've got there the two aspects, and we're absolutely accepted completely in both. Without blemish and no possibility of accusation. What perfect position this is in Christ. Well, now, before you get to the end of this chapter, the apostle makes an astounding statement. It's only a few verses. He says, verse 28, whom we preach. Of course, that is Christ among you, the hope of glory, whom we preach, warning every man. The warning has to do with danger. Well, what danger can these run? Warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom something they need to be told that we may present.

[00:20:38] You may present, Paul. These people are already assured by you that they are going to be presented without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. I'm quoting Ephesians. Would you like to go back to be sure that we've got the same idea there? This is an extension in Ephesians of the love of husbands to their wives. Verse 25 of Chapter five. Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word that he might present it to himself. A glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. But that it should be holy and without blemish. That's beauty treatment, isn't it? The real thing. No spot, no wrinkle or any such thing. They're going to be presented like that. Well, now, what does Paul out for then, when he says that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus? If you glimpse across to chapter two. A verse eight, he gives another little word of warning there. Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead, bodily and ye are filled to the full in him. That word complete is continuing, the word filled and full. So he says to them they are complete. Now, when you go a little further in Colossians to the last chapter, Chapter four.

[00:22:32] He's giving them a list of names of some who have served with him. Shall we read them? Because they've been written so that we may be encouraged to think that these men who served with the apostle have been remembered all down the age since. Verse seven, All my states shall tychicus declared unto you. Who's Tychicus? He is a beloved brother and a faithful minister and a fellow servant in the Lord. They are good degrees to have, aren't they? Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose that he might know your estate and comfort your hearts with Onissimus a faithful and beloved brother who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here. And Aristarchus, My fellow prisoner saluted you and Marcus sister Saint Barnabas, in defined as he Marcus coming back again. You remember in the early days because Barnabas rather favoured his nephew Mark. And Mark turned back at the dreadful ordeal that was waiting for them when they landed on the shores of Asia Minor. It was a dreadful place, according to Roman history. A nest of pirates. A place where you might never come safely through. He turned back, and there was a great division between Barnabas and Paul, But there was no grudge, apparently entertained here.

Now he says. Marcus sister son do Barnabas touching whom we have received commandments. If she come unto you receive him.

[00:24:06] And Jesus, which is called justice, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow workers unto the Kingdom of God. Which have been a comfort unto me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluted you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers. That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Here it comes again. Perfect and complete in all the will of God. So this man is praying in chapter 412 for the very self. Same thing that Paul was preaching and warning and teaching in chapter 128, whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Well, here we get then, of course, the reason why we must be so careful in the use of words. This is an old story with us, but it must be told again and again. The word perfect, which we find in this passage, which we find in Philippians, when he says, not as I were already perfect. Paul was not talking about his standing in Christ. He was accepted in the beloved. But the word perfect means to go on to the end. You know, the Greek word for the end is the word telos. And the Greek word for the word perfect is teleios. It's only an expansion of the word. And the Greek word for it is finished is the expansion of the word timaeus. And it's the word that is bandied about so much today in the word television.

[00:25:45] Not that the television is perfect, not that the word telephone is perfect. But the telephone, the television and the telegram and the telescope all have distance in their makeup, haven't they? Seeing at a distance, hearing at a distance, writing at a distance. And so the apostle uses the figure of a race. And the one who is perfect is not the one who thinks he's going to win, but the one who stays the course, finishes, touches the tape at the end. Oh, he said. It's one thing to have an inheritance. It's one thing to be made meet for the inheritance, but it's another thing to win or to miss the reward associated with the inheritance because you have been walking in harmony with it. It's one thing to be blessed with all spiritual blessings. It's another thing to be heavenly minded at the same time, isn't it? You see, there's a warnings in these that there's a possibility that instead of walking with two feet, you walk with one, you limp. And the one that limps is the practical side, which is not in walking in harmony with the high calling. So he says, you are perfect in Christ in one sense of the word, you're complete in him. But on the other, on the other hand, as this word perfect means to go on to the end, not merely to start, but to finish. He said, That's what I'm praying about.

[00:27:13] That's what I'm warning you about. That's why he said, it is so important that you should have this twofold aspect of truth. Not merely that you should take with both hands all the gifts of grace, but that you should also remember that great blessings. Have the other side of the story. Great responsibilities. So let us read these passages together again, shall we? Now bring them just before us before we come to a finish. Colossians Chapter one. Thus 12. Colossians Chapter one, verse 12. Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. That's the glorious calling of this people. And as we read it, there's not a thing that they can do to make it better. They cannot forfeit it for it's a gift in grace. Then we associate that with the next reference to the inheritance in chapter three, verse 22. Servants are buying all things your masters according to the flesh, not with high service as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart fearing God. And whatsoever ye do do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord, you shall receive the reward of the inheritance for ye serve the Lord Christ. So there's two aspects of the inheritance one, an indefectible gift, the other associated with a reward that you may win or that you may lose. Then coming back again to the other side of the story in Colossians one, verse 22, in the body of his flesh through death to present you Holy.

[00:29:09] And without blemish and unremovable in his sight. And that is the work of Christ in the body of his flesh. And yet, within a few verses, Paul says in verse 28, whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present not only that Christ may present, but that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. And there the word perfect is the key word. It doesn't mean improvement. It doesn't mean getting better. It means. You run the race, you touch the tape at the end and you can divide the word perfect, even in its English form, up into two parts per fact. You make that which is a possibility, a fact. You make that which is a promise into a reality. So it's one thing for us to be rejoicing with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, assuring ourselves that we're members of the body of Christ and so on. We must keep to that. That is blessedly true, but let us have the harmony in the balance. Even the apostle Paul, when he wrote the Mighty Epistle to the Ephesians, distributed his teaching so that three chapters one, two and three give us the great doctrine of our calling and chapters four, five and six. Give us the corresponding

practice. And he pivots the whole of the epistle on one word, which we find in Ephesians four.

[00:30:37] That is the word worthy walk worthy of the calling. And the word worthy is associated with the beam of a balance. So that you and I, when we have the glorious calling that we have in view, we put that in one's scale and then we put our walk, our witness, the way we live in the other part. Oh, dear, dear, dear. I wonder if anyone has the temerity of saying and my pair of balances are absolutely horizontal. Well, that's the things you have to live with you and work with. You are not quite so sure. But nevertheless, even though we may never attain it in this life, that is the goal that we should balance with our corresponding thankful life. The gifts of God that are without the possibility of merit or loss. I thought it was wise for me to stop in this exposition of Colossians before we go on to Paul's testimony as the prisoner of Jesus Christ, just so that we should not get so much in our heads and so much in our hearts with regard to the high calling as to forget that we walk with all lowliness as a correspondence that God has ordained. May he then give us grace to have perfect balance with regard to the things which are gifts and cannot be lost and the things that are held out to us as a prize or a reward that God will most surely wish that we should attain unto, if only we use the gifts that he has given us.