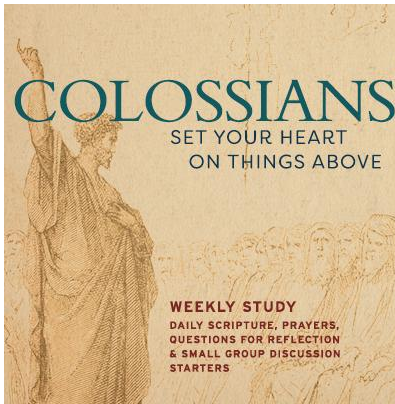




WEEKLY STUDY

Colossians - Week 4

In week four of our study of Colossians, we are looking at the language of Paul that says “Once” and “But now...” It’s the language of faith in the redemptive work of God in Jesus Christ. It causes us to look back and see what God has done. And it is the language of witness. May you sense the Spirit prompting you to be aware of the signs of new life around you this week. “Once I was _____, but now _____.”

For those of you continuing to pray through the Psalms daily, you will read Psalms 134-140 this week.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray for someone who is stuck in the “before” picture of their life. Pray for them to see God’s life-changing power at work in their lives so that they can get to their “but now...”

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: COLOSSIANS 1.21-23 (NIV)

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of^f your evil behavior.²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

- The faith we have in Jesus Christ is meant to move us forward. “Remember where you came from”, says Paul. If you begin to take credit for where you are now, you will miss out on the blessings and witness of a life changed by Jesus. Look back, not because of nostalgia or regret, but as a witness to God’s ability to transform us! What keeps you from looking back to the “Once I...” moments in your life? Give those fears to God in prayer.
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- **Prayer Prompt: Teach me your way, Lord,
that I may rely on your faithfulness;
give me an undivided heart,
that I may fear your name. (Psalm 86.11)**
- *God, because of Jesus I am able to name the brokenness of my past from a position of victory. Give me courage to look back so I can point to Jesus' transformative power. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ROMANS 3.20-21 (NIV)

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

²¹ *But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.*

- Following the law perfectly was never enough for righteousness. The law has a purpose, and it is to make us aware of our sin and our need for rescue. Now in Jesus, we have access to righteousness that is from God. When it comes to rules, we have a love/hate relationship. We push against them, and yet rules that are followed give us a sense of justification. Our righteousness is not about a check-list, rather it is a gift of God. What is your relationship with rules? Do you depend on your ability to follow them? What evidence have you seen that true righteousness comes from God through Jesus Chris?

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- **Prayer Prompt: I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ (Philippians 3.8b-9)**
 - *O God, I am nothing without the grace offered to me through your Son Jesus Christ. I want to obey your Word and I know your Law is good for me. Yet I am not good enough to do it on my own. Thank you for your grace. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ROMANS 6.21-23 (NIV)

What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- We are no longer slaves to sin but free because we are servants of a good God. Becoming “slaves of God” leads to holiness and eternal life. Choosing freedom vs. slavery to sin seems like a no-brainer, but we often struggle to live outside of this clear gift. What are the little things that seem to prevent you from fully living into the freedom God offers through Jesus Christ?
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- **Prayer Prompt: It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5.1)**
- *God, You have set me free to live a life for you. May my freedom from sin look like bondage to your will. Amen.*

THURSDAY: ROMANS 7.5-6 (NIV)

For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. ⁶ But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

- Paul is giving a hopeful message that we are no longer living just in the realm of the flesh. We have died to that, and now we are released to serve in a new way. We can serve in the way of the Spirit.

Paul was writing a strong message about the practice of faith. It was no longer contained in the law (which he said could be responsible for sinful passions), rather a life in the Spirit would lead to a more fruitful existence. Where do you see fruit that is born of the Spirit of God in your life? .

- **Prayer Prompt: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5.22-23)**
- *God, I want the world to see the fruit of your Spirit in me. I want to serve in the new way of Spirit. Free me for joyful obedience to your calling in my life. Amen.*

FRIDAY: EPHESIANS 2.12-13 (NIV)

remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- Once you were outside of the story...now you are in! This fits all of us who have been grafted into the story of redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Many of us can relate to the idea of being outsiders in one way or another. In Christ, we are no longer excluded from the story of salvation. What does it mean to your day to day life that Jesus has brought you near to God through his sacrifice on the cross?
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- **Prayer Prompt: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Ephesians 2.13)**
- *Almighty God, you have welcomed me into a story that was not my own. I am adopted into the story of salvation. What a gift you have given me! Amen.*

SATURDAY: EPHESIANS 5.8-10 (NIV)

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord.

- Once you walked around in darkness and now you walk around in the light of God! You might relate to the idea of walking around in darkness. What did (does) that season look like for you? How do you see the life of living in the light of the Lord? What does that look like? What is different?
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- **Prayer Prompt: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all¹ sin. (1 John 1.7)**
- *God, I want to be a person who walks in the light. I'm tired of hiding in the shadows, and hiding my sin. May your light set me free to live fully for you. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

Use the questions below to guide your conversation.

1. Paul describes a dramatic change in Colossians 1.21-22: "Once you were alienated from God... but now he has reconciled you." How does understanding where we once stood help us better understand what it means to be reconciled to God through Christ?
2. Verse 23 tells us to remain "established and firm" and not move from the hope held out in the gospel. What does it look like to remain grounded in that hope when we find ourselves somewhere between the "once" and the "but now"?
3. Jacob talked about the way grief, anxiety, shame, self-doubt, or other struggles can leave us feeling like an "enemy in our own mind." When your thoughts begin working against what you know to be true, how can setting your mind on Jesus as central, supreme, and sufficient change the way you respond?
4. Jacob described "Once I was... but now..." as the language of someone who has experienced the gospel. How would you complete that sentence from your own story? Why is it important not only to remember what Jesus has done, but also to be willing to speak it? How can we pray for you?