

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE -

11.12.2023

OVERFLOWING GRATITUDE

I. INTRODUCTION

Colossians 1:3, 12

3 **We always thank God**, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,... 12 **giving thanks to the Father**, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 2:6-7

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, **abounding in thanksgiving**.

Colossians 3:15-17

15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. **And be thankful**. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **with thankfulness in your hearts to God**. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks to God the Father through him**.

Colossians 4:2

2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, **being watchful in it with thanksgiving**.

II. THE CHARACTER OF GRATITUDE

Gratitude is to be continually offered

- “We always thank God...”
- In most of Paul’s letters, his general introduction is to give thanks to God for the believers in the churches he is writing to. (Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:3; 1Thess. 1:2; 2Thess. 1:3; 2 Tim. :3; Philemon 4)
- In this letter, he gives God thanks for their faith, their love for one another, and for how the gospel is bearing fruit and increasing among them. And that leads him to write a beautiful apostolic prayer for them.
- Paul writes this letter from prison. He is not in a good situation.
- Yet, even in chains, he has reason to be thankful.

- Thanksgiving freely flowed from him his life because it was not circumstance dependent.
- We normally begin our prayers with giving thanks to God for material blessings we have. But if we didn't have those things, would there still be things for us to be thankful for?
- 1 Thess. 5:18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
- All-circumstances gratitude is the will of God for us in Christ Jesus.
- This is one of the things that differentiates us from those who reject Christ, they are unwilling to honor God and give thanks to God, their Creator (Romans 1:21).

God is the supreme object of our gratitude

- Notice that his thankfulness isn't expressed to the believers at Colossae, it's directed to God.
- In God's Word, gratitude is largely directed to the supreme object of our thankfulness, God himself.
- 1:12 giving thanks to the Father...
- 3:16, 17 ...with thankfulness in your hearts to God... giving thanks to God the Father through him...
- Indeed, Paul writes that everything we do, whether in word or deed, is to be done in the name of the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father through Christ Jesus.
- The whole of the Christian life is to be oriented towards God.
- That shows us that gratitude and expressions of gratitude to God, are not dependent on our emotions.
- All of our life is to be lived in gratitude towards God and with thankfulness of heart because of who He is and all we have received from his good hand.
- The psalmists had this Godward orientation. You can't read the psalms without continually seeing expressions of gratitude to God for his goodness, his steadfast and unfailing love, his compassion and mercy, his kindness, his deliverance, his protection and care over his people, his mighty deeds, his glorious acts in creation, his forgiveness, just to name a few things.
- The expressions of thanksgiving take the form of prayers, and loud singing, and shouts and exclamations of praise, to the accompaniment of music.
- All of this gratitude is directed to the One who is the supreme object of our thanksgiving.

Gratitude is responsive

- We express gratitude as a response to something that has been done for us for and to us.
- When Paul thanks God for the believers at Colossae, he expresses how the Father has made them co-heirs of the glorious inheritance of the saints, how God has delivered them from the domain of darkness and transferred them to the kingdom of Christ, who redeemed them and forgave their sins.
- A heart that has been transformed by the grace and Spirit of God cannot help but express gratitude.
- If you struggle with gratitude to God, it's likely that you have forgotten how great a rescue you have experienced.
- When you remember these things, gratitude is the only response.
- How can we not be thankful for the amazing deliverance Christ accomplished for us, on our behalf?

III. THE WELLSPRING OF GRATITUDE

- The grace of God is the unceasing wellspring of gratitude in the life of the believer.
 - Gratitude is the response to grace.
 - This is why Paul exhorts with the gospel before he gives a command.
 - We hear the commands to be thankful and those commands divorced from the gospel truths are exhausting.
 - You don't become a more thankful person by trying to stir up feelings of thankfulness.
 - Any ethical instruction on gratitude must be saturated with the truths of the lavish grace of God.
 - When we get grace, gratitude becomes instinctive, responsive, and from the heart.
-
- Thanksgiving is connected to grace.
 - Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.
 - The Greek word for "grace" is "χάρις, charis". Grace is that unmerited favor of God, the undeserved kindness of God shown us in Christ.
 - The Greek word for the noun "thanksgiving" is the word "εὐχαριστία - eucharistia".
 - Thanksgiving is the act of expressing gratitude or showing appreciation to someone. It's the content of gratitude.
 - The root word for 'grace' is found in the word for 'thanksgiving.'
-
- 2 Cor. 4:15 For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.
 - As grace extends, gratitude increases.
 - You become more thankful by focusing more on the lavish grace of God given you in Christ.
-
- We see a powerful illustration of this in the story in Luke's gospel where Jesus heals the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19).
 - Ten lepers encountered Jesus as he entered a village between Samaria and Galilee and were healed by Jesus.
 - But only one returned, praising God, falling down at Jesus' feet and giving him thanks.
 - Our thanksgiving is directly proportional to our recognition of the grace shown to us in Christ.

IV. THE CULTIVATION OF GRATITUDE

Prayer + thanksgiving

- 4:2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.
- "Being watchful" means that we are alert in our prayers, begin vigilant,
- Praying is to be done in light of the truths of the gospel and informed by God's Word. When we pray this way we see things as they truly are.
- Those informed, steadfast prayers to God should be accompanied with thanksgiving.
- Philippians 4:6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
- Every request, every petition, should be accompanied with a corresponding expression of thankfulness.

- This prayer + thankfulness is an acknowledgement that our loving Father will answer all of our prayers by giving us what we have asked for or something better according to his will (Rom. 8:28).
- Prayer + thanksgiving cultivates and grows a heart of gratitude in us.
- Pray the Scriptures. Pray the apostolic prayers for yourself. Pray through the Psalms.
- This produces peace, and joy, and rest, and confidence, and hope, which overflow into greater gratitude to God.

A maturing walk with the Lord

- The whole emphasis of Paul's letter is his concern for their maturing in Christ.
- They had started in Christ and were to continue in Christ; being rooted and built up in him, established in the faith they were taught.
- Our growth in Christ should always lead us to more of Christ.
- From a letter written by Robert Murray McCheyne, "Learn much of the Lord Jesus. For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ. He is altogether lovely. Such infinite majesty, and yet such meekness and grace, and all for sinners, even the chief! Live much in the smiles of God. Bask in His beams. Feel His all-seeing. Eye settled on you in love, and repose in His almighty arms."
- Focusing on Christ will cause us to overflow with gratitude. We will give "thanks to God the Father through him."

Participation in corporate worship

- 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
- It's all focused on Christ from a corporate dimension. "The peace of Christ ruling in our heart," The word of Christ dwelling in us richly...doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus... it's all on Christ.
- But look at this reciprocal practice that we are exhorted to. We don't do this by ourselves.
- A maturing disciple of Jesus is marked by a life of gratitude to God in the context of the believing community.
- If you want to grow in thankfulness, be fully engaged in our corporate gathering.

CONCLUSION

- There is only one appropriate response to the breathtaking, awe-inspiring reality of the immeasurable grace of God shown us in Christ—gratitude.
- Gratitude for what God has done for us and continues to do in us is one of the key indicators of Christian health and maturity, of someone who understands the gospel and gets grace.
- Gratitude to God should be continually spilling over in our prayer, in our worship, in our conversations, in our actions, in our service, and in our love.
- If you struggle with gratitude, marvel at your Savior and then your heart will overflow with gratitude.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?