

The Theme of Thankfulness

7.26.09

Paul discusses thankfulness in each of the four chapters of his letter to Colossae. It ends up becoming a central idea in the letter.

The Theme of Thankfulness in Colossians

“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.” (Col 1:3-5)

- When was the last time you expressed thankfulness to God for his grace in saving you?
- When was the last time you expressed thankfulness to God for his grace in saving your brothers and sister in Christ?

“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.” (Col 2:6-7)

- There is difficulty and struggle in the Christian life but there should also be a profound sense of thankfulness.
- If there is not, then we are not walking rightly in the gospel of grace.
- Thankfulness happens when, by grace, we look more and more to Christ and less and less to ourselves.

“¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let 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.” (Col 3:15-16)

- It’s tempting to make the Christian life all about the bad things we are not doing and not about the good things God is empowering us to do by his grace.
- Are you working to cultivate a sense of thankfulness in your walk with Christ?

“Continue steadfastly in prayer being watchful in it with thanksgiving.” (Col 4:2)

- Prayer is not merely about asking for things.
- It is also about being thankful for we already have.

The Importance of Thankfulness

The BIG problem: I want what I want when I want it!

- The Bible calls this problem the lusts of the flesh or sinful desire
- *James 1:14—“But each person is tempted when he lured and enticed by his own desire.”*
- *2 Peter 1:4—Talks about escaping “The corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”*

The BIG solution: The grace of God in Christ, which teaches us to be thankful and to love and serve God and neighbor.

- As long as we are obsessed with getting what we want we will never be thankful for what God has already given us
- This means that thankfulness is the opposite of every sin we will ever commit

- We must work to repent of our arrogant tendency to demand and beg Christ for his grace to be thankful

The Challenges of Thankfulness

There are two times when it is particularly challenging to be thankful

The challenge of being thankful during good times

- Important: There is a difference between a paycheck and a gift.
- Three things to remember to help you be thankful when times are good
 1. You are a sinner and deserve nothing good (Romans 7:24)
 2. Every good thing that will ever happen to you is a result of God’s grace that was secured by Jesus in his life, death, and resurrection (James 1:17)
 3. God blesses you to remind you to be a blessing to others (2 Corinthians 1:3-11)

The challenge of being thankful during bad times

- Important: There is a difference between the bad things that happen and the good that God does in the midst of those bad things.
- Six things to remember to help you be thankful when times are bad
 1. God is humbling you (2 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Peter 5:6-7)
 2. God is drawing you closer to himself (1 Peter 4:14)
 3. God is making you more like Jesus (Philippians 3:10)
 4. God is equipping you to help others (2 Corinthians 1:3-11)
 5. God is leading you to repentance (Revelation 3:19)
 6. God is drawing you closer to other Christians (2 Cor 8:13-15)

The Grace-Empowered Work of Thankfulness (Philippians 2:12-13)

Where are your specific areas of struggle?

Pick one specific struggle this week where you will seek God’s grace to change

Ask God to forgive you of your sinfulness in this area

Ask God for the grace of Jesus to help you become more thankful

Action-Plan

Bible—What passages discuss the specifics of your struggle for change?

Beliefs—What are you desiring that needs to change?

Behaviors—What are you doing that needs to change?

Body—Who at Crossing can walk with you and help you grow and change?

Communion bears a special relationship to this theme of thankfulness.