

**Colossians 3: 12-17; “Giving Thanks to God” (Part 1), A Thanksgiving Sermon  
prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall, Delivered on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014,  
in the Morning Worship Service.**

The words, “And be thankful”, are set in the wider context of the duties and commands of the Lord that are given by the Apostle Paul to the saints and faithful brethren at Colosse. He is reasoning with them beginning in chapter 3, verse 1. He says, “If then you were raised with Christ, keep seeking those things above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” The Christian life begins with your being raised up from your spiritually dead condition which you have been in from your birth. When you hear the gospel and believe it, you are given life from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. You are raised to newness of spiritual life. And as you continue to grow and become more mature in your life, you are changed more into the image of Christ as you become a doer of the Word and not merely a hearer who deceives themselves. Let it be remembered that once you place your faith in Christ, you are enlisted into His service. And you now have responsibilities to fulfill if you are to walk in a manner which is pleasing to the Lord. Many aspects of your duty to Christ, and many aspects of your sanctification, are related to how you treat other Christians.

And so, I believe that verses 15 and 17 are very crucial to the fulfillment of all the duties that are listed here. We are commanded here in these verses to be thankful, and we are to give thanks when we go about to do whatever we do. We must remember that our God is watching us to see if we are thankful for all that He has given us. And we should receive this truth the Apostle Paul is giving us this morning, that it is because we are thankful that we will be able to do our duties in relation to God and man with a right spirit. So the question that I will ask this morning is this; “How can we show God that we are truly thankful for all that He has given us?” How can we be thankful as the text says? Beginning at verse 12, I think that we can find 4 ways that God will know that we are truly thankful for all that He has given us. We will look at two of them this morning and two this afternoon. Let me give you the overview now. 1<sup>st</sup> – You will clothe yourself with the graces of the Spirit. 2<sup>nd</sup> – You will let the peace of God rule in your heart. 3<sup>rd</sup> – You will let the Word of God dwell richly in your heart. And 4<sup>th</sup> – When you learn to give thanks in everything. Let’s contemplate these first two points for a few moments together. And then this afternoon we will look at the other two.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – God will know if you are truly thankful when you clothe yourself with the graces of His Spirit.** (Verses 12-14)

Verse 12 says, “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, and longsuffering.” Paul assumes that this is how the believers at Colosse should look at themselves; as the Elect of God, because they have believed in Christ and they have come to know by faith that they have been forgiven of all of their sins. He knows that they have received the Holy Spirit when they believed. He writes of this same truth to the believers at the church in Ephesus, in Ephesians 1: 13 and 14: “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” And also 2 Corinthians 1: 21 and 22; “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” The Holy Spirit has come to live in your heart, when you believe in Jesus, and He Himself being there, guarantees that a work of grace has begun and it will continue in you until the Day that you die; and even after that, when you are someday raised from the dead at Christ’s Second Coming. This we know; that “He who has begun a good work in us, will perfect it until the day of Christ.” (Philippians 1: 6) But here

we find that Paul is saying that since we have received the Spirit and the grace that will build us into the image of Christ, that we will not forget our responsibility in regard to the Spirit's work and Christ's grace. We are to "clothe ourselves" with the graces of the Spirit. We are to "put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do." These are the things that the true Christian clothes themselves with, out of thankfulness to God. If you are not doing these things you need to ask yourself whether you are really thankful for God's grace.

Let me give you an illustration. When you get up in the morning you put on your clothes. You choose them carefully because you not only want to put on a good appearance before others, but you know that clothing is also an expression of your person. So it is, that clothing yourself with the graces of the Spirit is a very necessary part of your heart "getting up" and waking up spiritually in the morning. Clothing yourself spiritually with these graces tells God what you think about Him, what you think about yourself, about life, and about others. Let me ask you whether you are truly thankful? Turn over with me to Psalm 96, verse 7. Here we find the Psalmist giving instructions on what the people of God are to do during their times of public worship: "Give to the Lord O families of the peoples, give to the Lord glory and strength, give to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering and come into His courts." "Oh worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." The words "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" in the NAS read this way; "Worship the Lord in holy attire." They refer to what the people, especially the Levites, wore when they came to worship the Lord; what they clothed themselves with. They wore special linen garments which showed forth the righteous life to which they were called. If they wore these special clothes, in those Old Covenant times, let us now consider how special the graces of the Spirit are to us, who are New Covenant priests unto our God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Hebrews chapter 13, verse 15 says: "Therefore by our Lord Jesus continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."

How important is it, to daily clothe yourself with a thankful heart? I want you to turn over to 2 Chronicles Chapter 20 with me, because we want to explore this a little deeper. In this chapter we find that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah hears that a great number of their enemies from the nations of Moab and Ammon are coming against them. Verse 2 says, "Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, 'A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, from Syria (Edom); and they are in Hazazon Tamar' (which is in EnGedi)." "And Jehoshaphat feared and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah." "So Judah gathered together to ask help from the Lord; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord." Then the king prays in verse 6 and he says, "O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?" Jehoshaphat believes in the sovereignty of God. He believes that God rules over the nations. But he also has a real fear of what these wicked men are going to do to himself and to his people. So he "sets himself to seek the Lord". This is also what you should do when you are afraid of men. Realize that the Lord is there for you, and seek Him. Let the peace of God rule in your heart and be thankful that there is a God in heaven who certainly strong enough to help you.

Well, there was a prophet of the Lord there that day by the name of Jahaziel, a Levite of the sons of Asaph. And he stood up in the assembly, it says in verse 15, and he said: "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem., and you King Jehoshaphat!" "Thus says the Lord to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's.'" I hope that this is something that you realize, as well. You will have spiritual struggles and battles. And we as a church will have them too. But let us remember to let the peace of God rule in our hearts to which we are called in one body; and be thankful. We need

not be afraid nor dismayed by the great multitude of the Lord's enemies and ours, which are arrayed against us. If we will but trust in the Lord and trust in His Word we will know God's help and His power exercised on our behalf. Let us see that we need to deliberately do this; we need to deliberately place our trust in the Lord, and consciously remember the promises of His help, and set ourselves to seek Him. Then the Lord will undertake for us, and we will see that the battle is not really ours, but the Lord's. Our battle will not be with flesh and blood. It will not be so much with other people. It will be with ourselves and our overcoming our temptations to be gruff and impatient, and unkind, and proud, and self-willed.

Sometimes there will come to us the temptations not to forgive others. And there will be the temptation to complain against other Christians; and not to remember what Christ has done in suffering for us, that we would be tender and merciful, kind and humble, meek and patient, and forgiving. Our battle will be against the spiritual forces in heavenly places; it will be with the Devil and with his strategies of using unbelieving men to get them to oppose us in living out our Christian faith. That is how he will war against us and against Christ's church. But this did not deter either Jehoshaphat or Jahaziel. Jahaziel says here in verse 17, "You will not need to fight in this battle." "Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!" "Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you." What was their response? Verse 18 tells us, "And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the Lord, worshiping the Lord." This was where the main battle was for the people of God then. Their struggle was found in their being able to continue to trust God, and to continue to worship Him, even when their enemies were many and were coming against them.

And do you not see, this is still the main battle for the Christian today, as well. It is to be able to worship God, and do what is right, even when all seems impossibly difficult. Let us remember to clothe ourselves with the graces of the Spirit. Let us remember to worship the Lord in all of our spiritual battles. Let us bow our heads and be thankful for all that He has already done for us in Christ. Let us lift up our heads, and realize that He will yet do many wonderful things for us. He will provide for our spiritual needs in times of great difficulty and calamity, when we worship Him and submit to Him. Let us be thankful. In all that He brings us into, He will bring us through. The victory in the battle is always from Him. It is always good for leaders in the church to lead in this holy way; being clothed with the graces of the Spirit. It is always good to do what Jehoshaphat did with the people. In verse 20 it says, "So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa..." That was where the battle was to be joined. And as they went out, we find Jehoshaphat the king was setting those who praised the Lord, out in front, as they went to battle. It says in verse 21, "When he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the Lord, and those who praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army they were saying, "Praise the Lord," (Give thanks to the Lord, it says in the ASV) "for His mercy endures forever." This was the way which God had appointed to lead them to victory. He wanted them to see that He was going to fight for them that day, so that they could win the battle. And the grace that He wanted them to clothe themselves with, was to express their thanks for what He would do for them; it was to praise the Lord with thanksgiving.

Thankfulness has a very real and direct relation to our winning our spiritual battles. When we clothe ourselves with tender mercies, when we show kindness and humility, when we exhibit meekness and patience toward other people, we are doing this because we are thankful for all the grace which God has shown us. Let's say that someone has offended you. Let's say that someone has sinned against you. And you are tempted not to forgive them, to become embittered against them, and to hold a grudge against them in your heart. You are tempted to speak against them, and work in every way against them. But this will only lead to your

dishonoring God. This will only lead to your not being able to love them as you are commanded to do. Leviticus 19: 18 says, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord." But if you will clothe your hearts and mind with these graces of the Spirit, if you will put them on, just as deliberately as you put on your clothing, then you may possibly win your brother or sister back to yourself. If you do will do this, you will find that God will be pleased with your right spirit. He sees that you have remembered that He has shown you mercy, He has given you grace; He has been, and He is being patient with you. He will see, I am saying, that you are doing these good things out of thankfulness to Him for extending to you His free grace. He sees that you have clothed yourself with tender mercies, kindness, humility, and meekness. He sees that you are being patient with other Christians. And He will bless you with a joyful contented thankful spirit. For you have forgiven those who have offended you; you have forgiven them when you had a complaint against them, because Christ once forgave you for things just as sinful as the things which they did unto you. All these right attitudes and actions come flowing out of your having received grace and mercy from God in relation to the whole body of your sins, which God has forgiven us for Christ's sake. These graces, to be able to be this way, come to you because Christ suffered to purchase them. Because of Christ's death and resurrection, the Spirit is working in you. You are thankful and now you are able to be thankful in everything.

**2ndly- The 2nd way that God will know that you are truly a thankful person is if you have His peace ruling in your heart.** (Verse 15)

Verse 15 says, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful." Peace and thankfulness go hand in hand. If you are a peacemaker, if you are a and peaceable man or woman, then you are that way because you have a great sense of thankfulness in relation to your having found peace with God, through your Lord Jesus Christ. God and you were at enmity with each other. This enmity, this hostility, no longer exists, because Jesus Christ died for you so that you would be reconciled to the Holy God. Having received the reconciliation offered in the gospel, you now have peace with God, through your Lord Jesus Christ. Based upon what Christ has done for you at the cross you are not only able to have peace with God, but you are able to have the peace of God with us as a tangible blessing which comes to your soul from God. Listen to the words of our Savior in John 14: 25-27. "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give unto you.." "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Your see, Jesus was going away to the cross. He was going to death. He was going to suffer, but He knew that He would be raised from the dead. He knew that He would ascend to the Father and He would sit at the Father's right hand until all His enemies would be made a footstool for His feet. The Lord Jesus did not want them to think that His teaching or help to them would stop, when all of this happened. He wanted them to know that the Father would send them the Spirit in His name. He wanted them to know, and He wants you to know, dear Christian, that it is by the Father's giving to every believer, of His Spirit, that each believer has peace given to them. They will, because of Christ's faithfulness, be given peace in relation to all their various decisions. They will be given joy in the midst of their trials; and most importantly, they will come to know the reality of these blessings in all of their relationships with other people.

Let us understand that while you are in this world, there will many things that could cause your hearts to be troubled and agitated. And these could include the things that other people, and even things which other believers might say or do to you. These things may provoke you to respond to them and act toward them in a sinful and fleshly way. We are told here in verse 15

that as individuals and as the body of Christ, the answer to this is to “let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which you were called in one body; and be thankful.” John Gill says in his commentary on this subject of peace ruling, “The metaphor is taken from the judge in the Olympic games, who was the umpire, the moderator, and who determined whose the victory was, and to whom the crown belonged; the apostle would have no other umpire among the saints than the peace of God.” “This may be said to reign in their hearts, when it is the governing principle there; when it restrains the turbulent passions of anger, wrath, and revenge, allays undue heats, moderates the spirits, and composes differences.” Gill is saying here that peace ruling in the heart does all this. The text itself says that we are called to this, especially in relation to the body of Christ; other Christians. The thing that we need to ask ourselves when we feel agitated and passionate about what someone else has done to us is this; “What does the peace in my heart think about this? What does the Holy Spirit who has given me this peace ruling in my heart, what does He think about this? For He knows that I cannot have peace and agitation of spirit reigning together in the same heart. They may both be in my heart, but one of them must rule the other. Therefore He gives a greater grace. Listen to Isaiah 57: 19 and 20. “I create the fruit of lips: Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near, says the Lord, and I will heal him.” “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” “There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked.” The wicked are agitated and troubled and they cannot rest because of their sin and the agitation of their heart.

I hope that you have come to know that in the gospel you are healed of the sins which produced the agitation. You have peace with God, and you have the peace of God. But as you probably know, the saints can also still become agitated and troubled by the sins of others against them, which may tempt them to treat others in the same way that they themselves have been treated. But listen to Romans 12: 17 and 18. “Repay no one evil for evil.” “Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.” “If possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” How can you live this way? It is when the peace of God rules in your heart. And the peace of God will rule when you realize that Christ Himself has given you the grace of peace by His Spirit’s working in your heart, so that you might use it in situations just like this. And He will continue to give you the peace by which you can overcome evil with good. That is what you and I are called to do. That is why it says in Philippians 4: 6, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” If you will let the peace of God rule in your heart, it will guard your heart and our mind as well. This is assuming that you and I will use the means of prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

Each one of here today should thank our Lord for the past victories of His perfect life and His sacrificial death, because it is these which have brought us to this state of peace with God. And then we should also thank Him for the present every day victories that come to us by His grace, through His Spirit, in answer to our prayers. If we will put the sins of the flesh to death, if we will wage war with our flesh by the power of the Spirit, we will find that we really will have the peace that we will need in dealing with our relationships with people around us. We will have such great peace that we will even be able to give thanks for the people that we associate with, who we think need to change, and grow in their faith. Often, it is immaturity in other believers that is very disturbing to us. But think with me about what the Apostle Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 3, verse 9: “For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect that which is lacking in your faith?” This is surely a matter of great thanksgiving, to be able to help one another in relation to our faith. Are you able to do this, dear Christian? You can by the grace of God be thankful.