

**Colossians 3: 15; "And be Thankful", A Thanksgiving Sermon prepared
by Pastor Paul Rendall, Delivered on November 19th, 2006
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 being raised up from our spiritually dead condition which we have been in from our birth. When we hear the gospel and believe it, we are given life from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. We are raised to newness of spiritual life. And as we continue to grow and to become more mature in our life, we are changed more into the image of Christ when we become doers of the Word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. We are in our Master's service and we have responsibilities to fulfill if we are to walk in a manner which is pleasing to the Lord. Many aspects of our duty and many aspects of our sanctification are related to how we treat one another as Christians. And I believe that verse 15 of the verses that I just read to you is very crucial to the fulfillment of all the duties that are listed here. It is God who is watching us to see if we are thankful for all that He has given us. And 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. 1st- We will clothe ourselves with the graces of the Spirit. 2nd- We will let the peace of God rule in our hearts. 3rd- We will let the Word of God dwell richly in our hearts. And 4th- We will learn to give thanks in everything. Let's contemplate each of these for a few moments together.

1st- If we are truly thankful We will clothe ourselves with the graces of the Spirit. (Verses 12-14)

Verse 12 says, "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, etc." Paul assumes that this is how the believers at Colosse look at themselves; as the Elect of God, because they have believed in Christ and have come to know that they have been forgiven of their sins. He knows that they have received the Holy Spirit if they believed. He writes of this 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 our hearts and to guarantee that a work of grace will begin and continue in us until the Day that we die, and even after that when we are someday raised from the dead. This we know, that "He who began 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 His work and His 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 we are not doing these things we should ask ourselves if we are thankful for God's grace. Let us ask ourselves whether we are doing this very thing this morning. When you get up in the morning you put on your clothes. It is the right thing to do. You choose them carefully, you not only want to put on a good appearance before others, but you know that clothing is also an expression of your person. It is what you think about yourself, about life, and about others. Perhaps it is even what you think about God Himself. In Psalm 96 it says, "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. In 2 Chronicles 20: 21, a passage that we looked at last week in the afternoon service, we saw 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 sang to the Lord and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, "Give thanks to the Lord, for His lovingkindness is everlasting." This was the way that God had appointed, so that they would win the battle that day, to praise the Lord with thanksgiving.

Even so, thankfulness has a direct relation to our winning our spiritual battles as well. When we clothe ourselves with tender mercies and kindness and humility and meekness and patience, we are doing this because we are thankful for how God has shown us grace. Someone has offended us, someone has sinned against us. And we are tempted not to forgive them, to become embittered against them and to hold a grudge against them in our heart. We are tempted to speak against them and work against them in every way. But this will only lead to our dishonoring God, and to our not being able to love them as we 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 we will clothe our hearts and minds with these graces of the Spirit, if we put them on, just as deliberately as we put on clothing, in order to be like God and to please God, then we will find that God is pleased with us and we will be able to clothe ourselves with tender mercies and humility and possibly win our brother or sister back to ourselves. God has shown us mercy, God has given us grace, God has been and is being patient with us. Therefore, out of thankfulness to Him for extending to us His free grace, we therefore will be tenderly merciful, kind, humble, meek(that is gentle), and patient with other Christians. We will forgive them when they have offended us, we will forgive them when we have a complaint against them, because Christ forgave us. So then, we must forgive those who have trespassed against us. All these right attitudes and actions come flowing out of our having received grace and mercy from God in relation to the whole body of our sins which God has forgiven us for Christ's sake. These graces, to be able to be this way, come to us because of what Christ has done, and what the Spirit is working in us, based upon what Christ has done. We are thankful and we are able to be thankful in everything.

2ndly- The 2nd way that God will know, and that we will know, that we are truly thankful people is if we have peace ruling in our 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 we are peacemakers and peaceable men and women, then we are that way because we have a great sense of thankfulness in relation to our having found peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. God and ourselves were at enmity with each other. This enmity no longer exists because Jesus Christ died for us so that we would be reconciled to each other. Having received the reconciliation offered in the gospel, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Based upon what Christ has done for us at the cross we are not only able to have peace with God, but we are able to have the peace of God with us as a tangible blessing which comes to our souls 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." Jesus was going away to the cross, to death, to be raised from the dead, to be ascended to the Father and to sit at the Father's right hand until all His enemies are made a footstool for His feet. He does not want them to think that His teaching or help to them will stop when all of this happens. The Father would send them the Spirit in Christ's name. And it is by the giving to every believer of the Spirit that each believer has peace given to them in relation to all their various decisions, joy, trials, and most importantly, interpersonal relations.

There are while we are in this world, many things that can cause our hearts to be troubled and agitated, and especially things that other people, and even other believers say or do to us that may provoke us 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 our hearts, to which we were called in one body; and be thankful." John Gill says in his commentary on this 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." John Gill is saying that peace ruling in the heart does all this. The text itself says that we are called to this 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 that Christ has given to me in the presence of His Spirit with me, think about this?" For 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. 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 cannot rest because of their sin. In the gospel we are healed of the sins which produce the agitation. We have peace with God, and we have the peace of

God. But the saints can 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. This may even happen between believers in the same church. 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 peace by His Spirit to use in situations just like this, and He will continue to give you peace, and through that means 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." We let the peace of God rule in our hearts, and it will guard our hearts and our minds as well. This is assuming that you and I will use the means of prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. We thank Christ for the past victories of Christ's perfect life and His sacrificial death that have brought us to the state of peace with God. And then we thank Him for the present victories that come by His grace, through His Spirit, in answer to our prayers. We put the sins of the flesh to death, we war with our flesh by the power of the Spirit, and we have peace and can be peacemakers in our relationships with people around us. We can even give thanks for the people that we perhaps think need to change and grow in their faith. Often, it is immaturity in other believers that is very disturbing to us. 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 matter of great thanksgiving to help one another in relation to our faith.

3rdly- We can be truly thankful for all that God has given to us if we let the Word of God richly dwell in our hearts. (Verse 16)

Now Paul is getting down to the particulars of what we will do if we are thankful people. In order to be thankful we should let the Word of God dwell in us richly. This means that we should meditate upon it day and night as it says in Psalm 1, verse 2. To have it richly dwell in our heart we must reflect upon it, ponder it, and pray over it as we read it. The Word should be speaking to us in our hearts. We should attempt to commit verses to memory as well, as it says in Joshua 1: 8. "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate upon it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. For the words of God's word "not to depart from our mouth," it will probably mean that we will be repeating them to ourselves over and over again. Our lips are moving as our minds think over the exact wording. Our minds and our hearts are meditating as we memorize and after a while the truth itself finds a place to reside in our heart. It "richly dwells" in us when we give the word the highest place in our thoughts, not some place in the closets of our mind. We put it in the living room, the dining room, the kitchen and the bedroom of our heart house. We have it there, ready at hand, for its being thought of and considered in everything that we do and say. Are you thankful to God that He has saved you and given you grace and the Holy Spirit to help you to live the Christian life? Then bring the Word of God, the precious, powerful, beautiful, convicting, cleansing, and encouraging Word

of God into your conscious consideration and meditation every day. Then when it richly dwells in you, you will be thankful, and that thankfulness will motivate you to think upon it more. This is how your heart and mind can become a storehouse for others. You will grow wise in your experience of the truth and you will be able to teach others. You can do this by your words and you can do this by your songs. Oh, how I plead with you to learn this way of glorifying God by singing with grace in your hearts, not only here in church, but also singing the hymns of Zion in your family devotions and in your personal devotion to God during the day. Fill your mind and heart with the good word of God. Teach others of the precious and powerful grace of God at work in your soul through what you sing to the Lord. This is how the Lord and others will know that you are a truly thankful person.

And then finally- We can be truly thankful people if we will give thanks in whatever we do in word or deed. (Verse 17)

Giving thanks is here shown to be right and appropriate in whatever situation that we are in. In all the situations that we find ourselves, in whatever we are doing, in whatever we are saying, our focus ought to be two-fold. We ought to be doing whatever we are doing, and saying whatever we are saying, in the name of the Lord Jesus. And, we ought to be giving thanks that He is One who gives us the grace to do or say anything right, anything of lasting value, anything that is glorifying to Him and edifying and helpful to others. In Ephesians 4: 20 it is worded in this way. "...giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are to give thanks in everything as well as our being thankful as our continual attitude and mindset. This can only happen when we are consciously thinking about the name of the Lord Jesus. In the name of the Lord Jesus we frame our prayers. We often end our prayers with the phrase, "In Jesus name." And this is right because all that we pray for and all that we ask for in our requests must come through Jesus to the Father, and it all must be in line with His word and His will. And our verse 17 in the text tells us that whatever we do in word or deed should be done, "in the name of the Lord Jesus." This tells us that our words and our deeds should both be accompanied by prayer and with the thought that what we are doing and saying would be pleasing to Him, that it would honor God and bring glory to Him. If we learn the duty of giving thanks in whatever we do and say, it will truly be a help to us in living righteously in the sight of God and men. People who are thankful to God in this way become holy people as time goes by. Unbelieving people who have known the way of the truth and yet did not act upon it are described for us in this way in Romans chapter 1, verse 21; "...although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, **nor were they thankful**, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened." "Professing to be wise, they became fools." This is what I pray that none of us will be. The knowledge of God, and the knowledge of His Word, and the knowledge of what Christ has done for us and what the Spirit is doing for us who believe, ought to lead us to be thankful; thankful in everything and for everything so that God would be glorified. May this be seen more and more in our midst.