

Colossians 3: 12-17; "And Be Thankful" (Part 1), A Thanksgiving Sermon prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall, Delivered on November 22nd, 2009 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 our 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 verses 15 and 17 of the verses that I just read to you are very crucial to the fulfillment of all the duties that are listed here. We are to be thankful, and we are to give thanks when we go about to do whatever we do. 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. We will look at two of them this morning and two this afternoon. 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 these first two points for a few moments together. And then this afternoon we will look at the other two.

1st- God will know if we are truly thankful when we clothe ourselves 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, 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 they 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 He Himself being there guarantees 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 really 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. So, it is; that clothing yourself with the graces of the Spirit is a very necessary part of your heart "getting up" and awaking in the morning. It tells God what you think about Him; what you think about yourself, about life, and about others. Are you thankful? 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; what they clothed themselves with. If they wore special clothes, let us think about how special the graces of the Spirit are. How important is the daily clothing ourselves with a thankful heart? I want you to turn with me to 2 Chronicles Chapter 20 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 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 his people. So he "sets himself to seek the Lord". This is also what you and I are to do when we 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 is strong enough to help you.

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 and said in verse 15, "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. Let's 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. But we do need to deliberately do this; to trust in the Lord and 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 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. There will be the temptations not to forgive others and to complain against other Christians, and not to remember what Christ has done in suffering for us; that we would be tender and merciful and 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; in being able to continue to trust God and to worship even when their enemies were many and were coming against them. And 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 bow our heads and realize that He will yet do many things for us in providing for our spiritual needs in times of 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 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 the place of battle. And as they went out, we find that 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 that God had appointed to lead them to victory; so that they would see that He was going to fight for them that day, so that they could win the battle that day. And the means of grace that He wanted them to clothe themselves with, was to praise the Lord with thanksgiving.

Thankfulness has a very real and direct relation to our winning these spiritual battles. When we clothe ourselves with tender mercies and kindness and humility and meekness and patience toward other people, 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." 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 said something to us, or done something 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. 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 this state of peace with God. And then we thank Him for the present victories that come to us 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 a matter of great thanksgiving, to be able to help one another in relation to our faith. This is where we will end this sermon. This afternoon we will continue on to look at the last two points.