



What should prayers of thanksgiving for other believers look like? Pastor leads his family in today's "Hopewell @Home" passage. Colossians 1:3–8 prepares us for the second serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these six verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that biblical thanksgiving for other believers is Christ-sized thankfulness that rejoices over the measure of God's grace, the means of God's grace, and the ministers of God's grace.

Thursday, September 9, 2021 ▫ Read Colossians 1:3–8

Questions from the Scripture text: What does the apostle give to Whom (v3a)? When doing what (v3b)? For what two things is he thankful and toward whom, respectively (v4)? What has been the foundation of this faith and love (v5)? Where did they hear of this hope? Where did this gospel come, and to where has it now gone (v6)? What is it bringing forth? What did they hear and know, that produced this fruit? From whom, also, had they learned this grace (v7)? What two things does the apostle call Epaphras? What else has Epaphras declared, to whom (v8)?

Just as he testifies that he always does when he prays for them, so the apostle here also does as he writes to them: he gives thanksgiving to God. Let us learn to be full of thankfulness to God, so that it comes out in everything that we do! Especially when we are going to be rebuking or warning of danger, as the apostle will be against Jewish legalisms and Greek philosophizing, we can have and communicate a right attitude if we begin with whatever thanksgiving we can give for whatever true evidences of grace we can see. By offering thanksgiving not only in his prayers but also here in the letter, the apostle models for us three great subjects of thankfulness in our prayers: the measure of God's grace, the means of God's grace, and the ministers of God's grace.

First, we are to be thankful for the measure of God's grace. Indeed, to measure this is to measure God Himself. As not only our Father in Christ, but Christ's everlasting Father within the Godhead (v3), we see that in His Son, God has given Himself to us and for us. So when we praise God for giving them faith (v4a), and love (v4b), and hope (v5), we do so knowing the great cost at which these have all been purchased: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son!" Jesus is "our" Lord because His Father gave Him to be so.

Second, we are to be thankful for the means by which God's grace is given us. This great gift of God Himself, with its great fruit in their lives of faith and love and hope, has come to them in a very simple fashion. True words entered their ears (v5b). What a marvelous gift God gives us, when He gives us to hear the words of the truth of the gospel! What extraordinary blessing He bestows on us and wonders He works in us through such an ordinary means as preaching! And it was like this not only in Colossae but in the whole world; it was the preaching of the gospel that bore this fruit (v6). How important, then, to stick to this preaching and reject the false self-advancement either of moralism like the Judaizers or humanistic philosophy like the Greeks.

Finally, we are to be thankful for the ministers by whom God's grace came to us. Paul had not planted the church at Colossae; Epaphras had. Still, the apostle piles up the affectionate ("beloved fellow-slave") and commendatory ("faithful servant of Christ") language. There is no spirit of rivalry here—only joy over another's labor and a desire that those who have benefited would also be grateful to God for him. He gladly affirms to the Colossians Epaphras's Christ-wrought service. For his part, Epaphras had done quite similarly, telling Paul of the Colossians' Spirit-wrought love. Let us learn to incubate thankfulness for believers' graces when speaking to God, so that our speech to one another may be filled with mature thanksgiving for one another.

What gives God's gifts to you their true measure? How does your thankfulness reflect the greatness of God's gift of Christ? What place does this give preaching, prayer, and the sacraments in those things for which you are thankful? How do you practice fostering and expressing your thankfulness for other Christians?

Sample prayer: Our gracious God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—how glorious is Your goodness to the children of men that for us You have given God the Son! Every one of your good gifts to Your adopted children in Him come in that love—but especially that Christian faith, love, and hope that we have in heaven with Him. We bemoan before You how small our thankfulness has been—both for Your grace and for those means by which You give it to us. Help us to treasure Your means of grace, and those believers with whom You have united us in grace, especially in the Son of Your grace, Jesus Christ, in Whose Name we ask it, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP22C "I'll Praise You in the Gathering" or TPH433 "Amazing Grace"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Colossians chapter 1 verses 3 through 8. These are God's words. We get thanks to the God and Father of our Lord. Jesus Christ, praying. Always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of your love for all the saints because of the hope, which is laid up for you in heaven of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel which has come to you as it has also in old world and is bringing fourth fruit as it is also among you since the day, you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.

As you also learned from a pathress, our dear fellow servant who is a faithful minister of Christ. In your behalf who also declared to us, your love in the spirit.

But since this reading of God's inspired and inherent word, notice that the apostle was you often does gives thanks for them. Just thanks to God for them before launching into his letter. Even though it's a small letter, he is going to be rebuking them for and warning them against letting Jewish legalisms, Jewish additions or clinging to things that were shadows.

Instead of clinging to Christ himself, letting those have a big part in their religion or on the other side, he also warned us against human wisdom. Things like would come in from Greek culture, just for many man-made edition from philosophy or seeming, spiritual wisdom, or cleverness. So he's got, he's got lots of things that he needs to correct them, about warned them about and he does by the spirit shows, some pastoral wisdom and expressing things giving to God for them first.

In this way, he expresses Christian affection, confidence, that they are believers. And they can receive the correction in the fatherly and brotherly spirit in which the apostle writes to them. That's a good example for us, sometimes you will not be able to affirm that. You have good hope of someone's conversion because you don't.

But in general, within a church that does practice discipline, you can give the judgment of charity to those who are members and good standing and speak to them as brothers and not make yourself a judge of their souls. And then you can add to that thanksgiving for those evidences of God's grace that you see in them.

And so he gives thanksgiving for those evidences and we'll see that he considers God. To have worked very graciously in them. And so the first thing we'll look at, is that he models thankfulness for the measure of God's grace in them. The second place, he describes how this has occurred.

And so, he'll express thanksgiving to God for the means, by which the he has done by which the Lord is done, this gracious work in the Colossians believers. And then, as he includes at the end of his little prayer of Thanksgiving here, a path for us and his ministry.

And then also, there the Colossians believers love. We see that he also models thankfulness for ministers of God's grace, those belief believers. And the that the Lord uses them to do. And so the apostle doesn't just say that he and Timothy give thanks praying. Always for them and it's a wonderful picture Paul and Timothy together in in prison having their prayer time.

Surely, they had private prayer time as well, but when Paul had for his family, his traveling companion, with whom he had been arrested in the ministry, he still had family worship and he's letting the Colossians know that he and Timothy and probably any others who are with them. Are involved in these prayers, but he doesn't just tell them that he prays and things.

God for them. He gives them an example of what that thinking God looks like. And he gives us an example, the Holy Spirit records for us, a way of a form, and example of thanking God in our prayers thanking God, for the measure of race, the means of his grace and the ministers of his grace first, then the measure of his grace since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of your love for all the saints, because of the hope, which is laid up for you in heaven, faith, hope and love are things that are spiritual and valuable, they are even better than tongues and other revelatory gifts for Corinthians verse chapters.

12 through 14 in describing the chaos that they had in the worship and the rivalry that they had in the congregation. Because people were, we're all wanting to be center-stage during worship, which is a horrible thing. Christ alone should be centered stage and worship and that had made problems with women, not covering their heads and people not understanding what's going on and at the table.

So that whole section from first Corinthians 11, through 14, the worship in, in Corinth, Paul had to correct. And as he sets Christ before them, he shows him how revelatory gifts are going to are going to come to an end because there's going to be a completed Bible, Jesus had promised and John chapter 16 that the Holy Spirit would lead the apostles into all the truth, all the things that he remained for

him to say to them and to say to us.

So that we, by the time, the epistolitic period is over, would have a completed Bible. But he says, when that is done three, things are going to remain faith. Hope and love. In this particular passage, he highlights the same three things and highlights them in the order faith, love and hope God has given them faith in Christ.

Jesus faith into Christ Jesus. So, not only have they believed that. Jesus is God, who became man, to save them. But this faith that the Holy Spirit has worked in them is a reality by which they have been joined to Jesus Christ. They are Christ's and Christ is theirs.

And so they belong to him forever and ever. And because they have this faith into Christ and they have this union with Christ, they have love for all the saints. It's exactly what Jesus said this is they how they will know that you are my disciples by your love for one another.

I remember in the previous letter in Philippians, when Paul was telling Philippian believers, how he loves them, He said, he loves them with the bowels of Christ, Jesus with the guts of Christ, Jesus. And so this faith that they have in Christ. This love that they have from Christ for all the saints and not only does he think God for that faith and love, but he thinks God for the hope that is laid up for them in heaven.

The faith that they have in Christ. Now, the love that they have for Christians from Christ now shows that they are going to comment to the last day, they'll be raised again from the dead perfected. Souls glorious bodies and inherit together with Jesus and you heavens and you earth and Christ.

The resurrected Savior who sits in glory in heaven. At the time of Paul's writing is the guarantee that they shall surely see of all of this. And so Paul is thinking of what God has done in them and what God is doing through them and what God has reserved and guaranteed that he is yet to do for them and he overflows with Thanksgiving, because believers are still sinners, it is easy for us to find them.

Rather unremarkable and we even find ourselves when we come to pray for someone perhaps having difficulty lifting up, Thanksgiving for them, perhaps because we're focused on how they have sinned against us or what there is left to do in them things that they are thinking or doing incorrectly, that we are concerned about in their behalf.

Even as Paul is concerned for the Colossians, we find out later the letter, but if you focus on these supernatural, the almighty work of God's grace that has been done in them and the perfection that they will be and that they will receive in the last day as he focuses here on faith and love and hope he gives.

Thanks for the measure of God's grace. How greatly God has loved them. Indeed, you can even see in the name that he gives God. The beginning of verse three, we give thanks to the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That God, the son became a man. The father gave his son to become a man for us out of the greatness of his love for us.

And so this is the measure of God's grace to us Christ himself, as the measure of God's grace, to us. God didn't just give them faith and give them Christ. He didn't just give them love. He give them Christ. He didn't just give them hope he gave them Christ and so this is what enables us to offer.

Praise unto, God thanksgiving to God for all believers. So we're to be thankful for the measure of God's grace and others. We're also be thankful for the means by, which God has given this grace continuing in verse five of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.

Paul was not the one who planted the church in Colossus. It seems that perhaps a mentioned here was the one but the human actor. Although we are to be thankful for him is not to be compared to the means of grace themselves. The word of the truth of the gospel.

And so Paul Paul marvels that God has sent a man and the man spoke words and those words were the very words of God that were the words of truth, where the words of the good news of what God has done in Jesus. There were the words of the truth of the gospel and that man spoke words and the Holy Spirit, worked faith by those words, in the Colossians believers hearts and they came into this faith and opened love by the Holy, Spirit's almighty work, through that word.

And so Paul starts thinking God for what he's done in Colossi and he realizes as he's thinking, God for what he's done in class, he's doing it everywhere. Yeah. There's a danger in being self-focused or proud or even self anxious and discouraged. We could think about all the wonderful things that God is doing at our church.

And and we could either be proud and think that our church isn't like all those other churches or we could be discouraged. There are many churches that are not churches at all and many others that are very unhealthy and, and we could think incorrectly that, what the Lord is doing at our church as an isolated

work as all.

No, but no, we know, as a Bible fact that the Lord, Jesus is building his church, that is word is going out with power all over the world. And that every place that this happens is a miracle. And so, as he starts thinking, God, for the means of his grace and Colossy, which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel which has come to you.

He says, as it has also in all the world. So we praise God for the means of his grace and we praise God. For his grace in the means he says and is bringing forth fruit. And so Paul is letting them know that the work that God has done among them is a part of a work that God is doing in many places.

And many places people are coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Abandoning, who they were, their former person is gone, and they are a new person in Jesus, in many places. These new people in Jesus are full of love to the saints and many places. The word is varying, the fruit.

Not only a faith and love, but also hope they are clinging to Christ and heaven and to another lasting inheritance and not anxious over the cares of this world or or entrapped by the pleasures of this world. He says it's bringing forth fruit all over the world and it has been bringing fruit forth, fruit among you.

You continues to say in verse six as it is also among you since the day, you heard a new the grace of God and truth. So we should love missionary reports. We should love to read from history what God has done in various places, by the sending of his word, we should pray for the word to be sent and the word to worked.

We should be glad to know of or meet other Christians from other churches and all over the world. So you think giving for the measure of God's grace, this is almighty work that he's done in the other believer. Thank. Thank you thanksgiving for the means of God's grace, that he's given, especially the word here, but also the sacraments in prayer and then thankful thanksgiving.

Also, for the ministers of God's grace, those by whom he brings these means and that's where he because gets in verse 7 and not only now is he thinking God for a pathress? He's really provoking them to think God for their minister. As you also learned from a pathress, our dear fellow servant and so he his Christian love for a pathress overflows and thanksgiving to God.

And he's trying hope the Colossians as well. Our dear fellow servant who is a faithful minister of Christ than your behalf, You think that you sent him to me. But it was Christ, especially who sent him from you to me, He's saying whenever the Lord uses another believer in our life, we are to view them.

Not only with the love that we have for them as being someone who belongs to Jesus. But with thankfulness to Christ who is using them and our life, they are one of Jesus's love gifts to us and that's not just of those who are in a formal office in the church like a prophet.

So it's but also all the Colossians themselves verse 8 who also declared to us your love in the spirit. And so we are thankful for one another as instruments by him. God does this work in our lives. So not not, it does not take much, all it takes is a believer and you can thank God for a great measure of grace.

And is great means of grace and for using other believers as ministers, unto us of that grace, if you are the kind of person kind of Christian, you is in one of those seasons of having difficulty thinking God, for others, then, the apostle here has given us a model that helps us to offer Christ's size thanksgiving for Christ, sized grace, let's pray.

We pray, Lord that you would help us to see the greatness of your gospel and your goodness and giving us your son and how wonderful. Even just this time of Bible study and then especially in the public worship and the word and sacraments of prayer and prayer there. How wonderful are the means by which you give yourself to us in Christ by your spirit.

And we pray that you would give us hearts that are full of this thankfulness so that it wouldn't be difficult when we come to pray to give thanksgiving for others. So we pray that our hearts and minds would be full of that thanksgiving. And that you would train us by this portion of your word.

We ask that your Holy Spirit would keep us remembering and growing and understanding our understanding of the things that we have heard from this portion of your work, be glorified by working in us and making us like Christ and making us like the apostle, whom you were conforming to Christ indeed.

We pray that the work that you have begun in us. We would bring to completion until the day of Christ work, faith and hope, and love, and us. We pray work thanksgiving in us. We, we ask all these things and she's just made and then.