

“GIVING THANKS TO THE FATHER”

Colossians 1:12-14

Intro: I hope you all are reading Colossians at least once a week. I don't know of any other way for us to get the message of this letter written upon our hearts than to read it over and over again. Every part of the epistle will mean more to us when we see the message as a whole.

For you who are with us for the first time since we started the study of this letter from the Apostle Paul to the church at Colosse, we have learned from the first part of chapter 1 that this was a *thriving* church. It was not thriving as some so-called church experts would define “thriving” today, but thriving with the blessing of God. The people were giving evidence that they were saved by manifesting faith in Christ Jesus, by their love for each other, and by their hopeful anticipation of the return of the Lord. People were being saved right along, and, in turn, they, too, became spiritually fruitful in their lives.

It was the kind of a church that some might not feel would need a letter like this, nor the kind of praying that Paul indicated he was offering up to the Lord on their behalf. He not only told them that he was praying for them, but he told them *what* he was praying. As I mentioned last week Paul was wise in the work of the Lord, and he knew that the Devil would not let a work like this alone, but that he would be doing all that he could to put a stop to the blessing. Paul had never been to Colosse when he wrote this letter. He knew some of the people, but not all of them. However from the first time he learned of the work, he had been praying for them and had recently learned about false teachers who were already at work with some of the people.

Last week we considered his prayer. It is a wonderful prayer, a prayer which we would do well to pray for ourselves as well as for others who are upon our hearts like the Colossians were upon Paul's heart.

His basic request for them was that they would know the will of God, and keep learning more and more about the will of God. This request had to do with their knowledge of Word of God. This is found in verse 9. His reason for wanting them to know the will of God, is expressed in the first part of verse 10: that they might live in a way that would be worthy of the Lord, seeking *to do* the will of God in all things. If this were being done day after day, then, according to his prayer, Paul knew that four important

things would follow:

1) They would be fruitful in every good work.

2) They would be growing in their knowledge of God.

Both of these are in the latter part of verse 10.

3) They would be strengthened to persevere in times of trial and testing, and persevere and be longsuffering “with joyfulness.” This, as you can see is in verse. 11.

4) In verse 12 they would be “giving thanks to the Father” as a daily habit.

I don't think a person can be a Christian, a true Christian, and not want to see those results in his or her life. But it all depends upon time spend in the Word, and then following the Word to live a life of obedience to God's will. The Spirit of God is our Teacher when it comes to the Bible. And as He teaches us the Word, He not only gives us the desire to live according to God's will, but He enables us to do it! And then one blessing follows after another.

In verse 12 where I want to begin today Paul mentioned thanksgiving for the second time, but not the last time. The first time is in verse 3 of this chapter. The second is here in verse 12. And if you have been reading this letter you perhaps have noticed three other times in these four chapters that Paul mentioned giving thanks. The next is at the end of 3:15. After that we see thanksgiving in 3:17. The last is in 4:2.

Thanksgiving to God is one form our prayers should take, and I believe I am right when I say that we should never pray without expressing our gratitude to God for the blessings He so generously pours out upon us every day that we live. In fact, the Greek verb which is translated “giving thanks” is εὐχαριστοῦντες, a present participle which means *to give thanks and to keep on giving thanks*. If we lack an attitude of thanksgiving in our hearts, it is evident that we are not spending enough time, or the right kind of time in the Word. If you and I are having trouble with our daily walk, or our service, or our knowledge of God, or our ability to persevere in spite of our troubles, the answer to these problems is to be found in verse 9 which is the basis of all of Paul's prayer.

It is so easy to begin our prayers by telling the Lord what we want Him to do for us. I know because I have struggled with that problem. But the best place to start is by “giving thanks unto the Father.” As the words of that Gospel hymn teach us,

Count your blessing, name them one by one;

And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.
But after you count them, then give thanks for them.

But I want you to notice one more thing about this phrase. The whole phrase is, “giving thanks unto the Father.” In verse 3 Paul wrote, “We give thanks to God.” We often here even people who aren’t Christians say that they are thankful for this or that, but they don’t indicate to whom they are giving thanks. We ought also to make it clear that we are giving thanks to God, or the Father, or even to Christ, or the Holy Spirit. We can be thankful for what people do for us, but ultimately our blessings come from God, so we need to be thankful to Him!

But I want you to notice something that I hope will be a blessing to you about the way Paul expressed thanksgiving here in verse 12. It was that our thanks should be addressed “unto the Father.” This speaks of a very special relationship that we have to God. It means that we are coming to Him as His children, and He loves to have us call Him, “Father.” I learned just this past week that our Lord Jesus Christ used this title, “Father,” when speaking to or about God, approximately 150 times while He was here on earth, and that that far outnumbered the times that He spoke of His Father as “God.”

Now I am not saying, nor did our Lord ever suggest, that it is wrong to speak of God as God. He is God, the one and only true God. But God loves to be addressed as “Father” by those of us who are His children. I think I mentioned to you once before what Dr. James Packer said about this in his book, *Knowing God*. Let me read to you what he said. Here it is:

If you want to judge how well a person understand Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. “Father” is the Christian name for God (p. 182).

Liberals have misused this term, *the Fatherhood of God*, teaching that everybody is a child of God. That is heresy. Those who are the true children of God are those who have experienced the new birth. We are

born into the family of God. It is by the Gospel, and by the work of the Holy Spirit that we have been “born again,” *born from above*. We have the life of God in us by faith in Jesus Christ.

And this is exactly what the Apostle Paul went on to tell us in the rest of verse 12 and all of verse 13 and all of verse 14. Of all of the blessings that we need to thank our heavenly Father is the blessing of salvation by which we have been made members of the family of God. And in our text for this morning the Apostle mentioned three glorious aspects of our salvation, and he was saying that we ought always, continuously, thank the Father for making us His children.

What are the three truths that Paul mentioned here?

- 1) Partakers of an inheritance (v. 12).
- 2) Our translation (v. 13).
- 3) Our redemption (v. 14).

Let us notice what the Apostle Paul had to say on these three subjects.

I. PARTAKERS OF AN INHERITANCE (Col. 1:12).

“Inheritance” – That primarily is a family word, isn’t it? But here Paul was talking about “the inheritance of the saints.” We have already had that word at least twice in this chapter. See vv. 2 and 4. What or who is a saint? Have you ever seen a saint? Saint is probably Paul’s favorite word for those of us who are the people of God. It describes our position, but not necessarily our condition. We may not be as saintly as we would like to be, but we are saints never the less. God has set us apart for Himself. We belong to Him as His family.

“Made us meet” as it is expressed in the KJV means “has qualified us.” By nature we are not qualified for such a blessing, but it is because of what the Father has done for us through the death of His Son that we are fully qualified “to be partakers of the saints in light.” What is our inheritance? Is it money? It’s far better than money. No amount of money could buy it. It is our by sovereign grace. Our inheritance is the fulness of our salvation in Christ. It means being in heaven. It means being with the our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and each other for all eternity. It means being like the Lord. Paul called it “the exceeding riches of His grace” in Eph. 2:7. And it is “in light,” no longer in darkness. “Light” speaks of absolute purity, all that God is. The Apostle Peter expressed it this way, as we learned in our memory work this year:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:3-5).

This is an inheritance that you and I as God's children cannot lose. We are already enjoying part of our inheritance, but the day is coming, when we will have it all.

But let us go on to the second point which has to do with:

II. OUR TRANSLATION (Col. 1:13).

This is another thing that has happened to us, an act of sovereign grace and almighty power. We were born under the authority of darkness and the prince of this world. We were slaves to sin, and unable to deliver ourselves. But our Father has delivered us through the work of Christ, and we have been "translated . . . into the kingdom of His dear Son," or lit., *the Son of His love*. No longer are we the slaves of sin, under Satanic control, but now we are members of the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is our Savior and our Lord. He has broken the bondage under which we lived, and now we are free to live lives to please God. If this were not true it would be impossible for us to live like Paul prayed that the Colossians would live as he expressed it in the first part of verse 10.

This is not something that is going to take place for you and me; it has already happened. And it is not a partial deliverance, but it is complete. It is not from complete darkness to less darkness, but again quoting the Apostle Peter,

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:
10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy (1 Peter 2:9-10).

The Devil is no longer our slave master, but God's beloved Son is our Lord. And He will never let the Devil take command of our lives again. Can't you and I see from this how we ought to be constantly "giving

thanks unto the Father”)? I love those words penned by that young Scotch preacher, Robert Murray McCheyne, whom the Lord took to heaven when he was only twenty-nine years old:

Chosen not for good in me, Wakened up from wrath to flee,
Hidden in the Savior’s side, By the Spirit sanctified,
Teach me, Lord, on earth to show,
By my love, how much I owe.

You would think that this would have been enough to draw from us endless praise to our heavenly Father even though all that Paul says here is just a small glimpse of our great salvation. But there is one more point.

III. OUR REDEMPTION (Col. 1:14).

Notice that this is another present possession. We are redeemed. The words “through His blood” are not in some of the better MSS, but they are in Eph. 1:7:

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

And we find the same in 1 Peter 1:18-19:

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Cf. also Heb. 9:11-12:

11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Our redemption carried with it a great price, a ransom which was required to satisfy the righteousness of God. So the thought of justification is here, which carries with it the idea of forgiveness, the forgiveness of all sins. Again the thought here is deliverance from the power of sin and the release from all charges against us because our penalty was born by our Lord Jesus Christ in His death on the Cross. And since the work of redemption was once for all, the work of our Savior never needs to be repeated. It was once for all.

Concl: Notice that at the beginning of Paul's prayer in verses 9 and 10 he wrote "ye." But when he came to the verses where he was surveying those great truths of the Gospel, he changed to "us" and "we." His prayer was for them, but when it came to the Gospel, he took his place at the side of the Colossian believers, all of them, and was glad to acknowledge the need that he had as a sinner saved by the grace of God, to give to God, as his Father, constant thanksgiving for all that He had done through the sacrifice of His Son for his own salvation. Whether a person is a Jew like Paul, or a Gentile like most of the Colossians probably were, their need was the same, their salvation was the same, and their responsibility to thank the Father also was the same.

Now for us after having considered these verses, let me ask that none of us who knows the Lord will let this day pass without "giving thanks unto the Father" for what He has done in saving us. It is one thing to know what we should do, but the blessing comes when we do it.