

# EXPOSITORY TEACHING ON THE LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

## MESSAGE TWO: NO GREATER ATTITUDE LIKE GRATITUDE

### **SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:1-5**

[1] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, [2] To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

**“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God”:** “of” speaks about “whose” and “by” speaks of “how.” Paul did not write about his apostleship to elevate himself. He wrote to remind the recipients that what he writes as an apostle of Christ, by the will of God, having divine authority and endorsement. When Paul did not evangelize them nor planted the church among them, why then should they listen to him? It is because he was an apostle.

**“Timothy our brother”:** This does not mean co-authorship. Except in Romans, Ephesians and Galatians, Paul includes the names of his co-workers in his epistles to the churches. He worked as a team and acknowledged his key team members (present with him) in his letters to the churches. Paul also might have written this letter with the help of Timothy (in writing for him) and the recipients might have even known Timothy.

**“To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae”:** “Saints in Christ” are “holy ones”, not by their acts, but through faith in the sacrificial offering of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. “Faithful brothers,” the plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. Despite being threatened with false teachings, the church here was endeavoring to be faithful.

**“In Christ and in Colossae”:** In Christ (spiritual relationship) and in Colossae (local residents). They were in the world but in Christ.

**“Grace to you and peace from God our Father”:** Common greeting of Paul in his letters.

**Scripture:** [3] We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, [4] since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, [5] because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

**Question:** What is the difference between prayer and thanksgiving? Prayer is *asking* God to *give*. Thanksgiving is *thanking* God for *giving*.

**Thanksgiving in Greek:** Ευχαριστία (Eucharistia), “Giving of thanks” or “Gratitude.” It is from here that the term “Eucharist” (Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper) was derived.

### **1. Thanksgiving is an integral part of Prayer.**

*Paul’s Exhortation:*

- ❖ **Col. 4:2**, “Continue steadfastly in *prayer*, being watchful in it with *thanksgiving*.”
- ❖ **Phi. 4:6**, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by *prayer* and supplication with *thanksgiving* let your requests be made known to God.”
- ❖ **1 Thess. 5:16-18**, “Rejoice always, *pray* without ceasing, give *thanks* in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

*Paul’s Example:*

**Note:** Every letter of Paul, except Galatians, begins with thanks or praise.

- ❖ **Col. 1:3**, “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.”
- ❖ **1 Thess. 1:2**, “We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers.”
- ❖ **Phi. 1:3-4**, “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy.”
- ❖ **Philemon 1:4**, “I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers.”

## 2. Thanksgiving must *always* (not occasionally) be given to God.

- ❖ **Col. 1:3**, “We *always* thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.”
- ❖ **1 Thess. 5:16-18**, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks *in all circumstances*; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

There is never a situation in which we don’t have anything to thank God. We must always give thanks to God because God is always good and works all things for our good.

### Examples:

- You may complain, “I cannot see well with my eyes.” But you can thank God for legs and other things.
- You may complain, “My husband doesn’t appreciate me.” But you can thank God he is not abusive.
- You may complain, “I have less salary. But you can thank God you are not a beggar on the street.”
- You may complain, “I struggle with anger.” But you can thank God for not being a thief.
- You may complain, “I am hurt by that person.” But you can thank God that he did not kill you.

**Illustration:** When Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, was robbed, he wrote in his diary, “Let me be thankful. First, because I was never robbed before. Second, because although they took my wallet, they did not take my life. Third, because although they took my all, it was not much. Fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.”

**Question:** We may feel sad for what we do not have, but do we feel glad and thank God for what we already have?

**Point:** People who develop this attitude of gratitude will cease becoming complainers and grumblers, and grow in looking at things with godly perspective.

### 3. Thanksgiving must precede prayer.

❖ **Col. 1:3**, “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.”

**Note:** From 1:3-5, Paul expresses his thanksgiving. And from 1:9-12, Paul expresses his prayer. This is common in Paul’s letters.

Paul first expresses his thanksgiving and goes then into prayer. It is good to thank God first *before* we pray for anything.

### 4. Thanksgiving must be expressed primarily for spiritual blessings.

❖ **Col. 1:3-5**, “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.”

About what Paul was greatly excited and gave thanks to God? Faith in Christ and love for the saints.

- Paul did not thank God for people’s earthly things. He thanked God for spiritual blessings—faith and love. To Paul, these are more important than material blessings.

**Question:** If we express thanksgiving to God primarily for earth things, what does it speak of us? That we are focused more on earthly blessings.

- If these qualities moved Paul to thank God, this is what we need to seek in our own life more than earthly things.
- ❖ **Eph. 1:15-16**, “For this reason, because I have heard of your *faith in the Lord Jesus* and your *love toward all the saints*, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.”
- ❖ **Philemon 1:4-5**, “I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your *love for all his holy people* and your *faith in the Lord Jesus*.” [NIV]
- ❖ **2 Thess. 1:3**, “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your *faith is growing abundantly*, and the *love of every one of you for one another* is increasing.
- ❖ **1 John 3:23**, “And this is his commandment, that we *believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ* and *love one another*, just as he has commanded us.”

**Question:**

- Are you seeking to grow more in faith in the Lord Jesus and in love for God's people?
- Are you excited more about these godly qualities or earthly things?
- Can your leaders or others thank God for your faith in Christ and love for the saints?

**5. Thanksgiving shows that God is the *source* of all blessings.**

- ❖ **Col. 1:3-5**, "We always *thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven."

**Observe:** Paul did not thank believers for their faith and love. He thanked God. When Paul thanked God for the spiritual qualities in God's people, he saw God as the *source* of these blessings. God is the *giver* of all blessings.

- Beware of elevating "self"
- Beware of elevating "man"

**Remember:**

- i. When you see in yourself a good quality, thank God for changing you and blessing you with His virtue. Apart from His life-transforming work in us, we are worst beasts.
- ii. When you do any good, thank God for giving you the grace to do it. Consider yourself unworthy servant and glorify His name for the privilege to do good.
- iii. When you see a good quality in a person, thank God for bringing that virtue in that person. Praise the good Lord for His goodness and good work in others. This is not to say we must not thank people at all. When necessary, first thank God for using them and thank them for yielding to God.
- iv. Don't elevate neither yourself nor others. Elevate God. We all are what we are only by His grace. Blessed be His name.

**SUMMARY:**

1. Thanksgiving is an *integral part* of Prayer.
2. Thanksgiving must *always (not occasionally)* be given to God.
3. Thanksgiving must *precede* prayer.
4. Thanksgiving must be expressed *primarily* for *spiritual blessings*.
5. Thanksgiving shows that God is the *source* of all blessings.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. What are the five elements that we learn from Paul's thanksgiving to God?
2. What is the difference between prayer and thanksgiving?
3. Is thanksgiving an integral part of your prayer life?
4. Do you thank God as much as you pray to God?
5. Do you thank God more for material blessings or for spiritual blessings?
6. Do you elevate yourself when you see good quality in you and do good works, or do you elevate God?
7. Do you elevate others when you see good quality in them, or do you elevate God?
8. Do you pray, seek and make every effort to grow in faith in the Lord Jesus and in your love for the saints of God?
9. How did you consider thanking God in all situations?
10. How did you prayerfully considered to change your life after hearing the message?