

be true of every Christian. Day by day, our lives ought to be bearing more fruit of Christlikeness. If we are not growing, we are stagnating. You cannot stand still in the Christian life.

- 3) When we hear of continued spiritual growth in others, we ought to thank God for it.

4. We are to be thankful that we heard of their love

a. Thank God that we heard about them (v.8)

- 1) If you recall the story about the little old man in Sydney, who for many years handed out tracts, but never heard of one convert. Before he died, God allowed a preacher to track down and report to that old man the conversions of scores of people saved by reading his tracts. Amen!
- 2) As you pass out tracts and witness, you may never know until eternity those who responded.
- 3) God does not always allow us to hear when people are converted here at home or on the mission field, but when He does let us know, we ought to take time to sincerely thank God that He allowed us to hear that encouraging news.

b. Thank God that they know God's love (v.8)

- 1) We ought to thank God every time we hear that a person comes to love God.
- 2) We must never be jealous if we were not directly involved in their conversion. God does the saving. Witnesses are just His servants.

Conclusion: When praying for other Christians, for what are we to be thankful. Our text has answered that question for us (Review).

When we hear that a person has trusted Christ, whether it be on the mission field or in our neighbourhood, we ought to thank God just as if it had been our loved one or a dear friend.

I challenge you to tuck this message away in your heart and every time you hear of a conversion, do as Paul did, give thanks to God and keep them in your prayers.

Song: Teach Me to Pray – 346

Praying for Other Christians

26 February 2023 PM – Colossians 1:3-8 – Col23 – Scott Childs

Introduction: Have you ever noticed how frequently believers in the Bible included thanks in their prayers? It was a common practice. A large part of our prayers for others ought to include thankfulness.

As Paul and Timothy began this letter to the Colossian church, they devoted 1:3-8 to the topic of giving thanks to God for those believers.

As I was preparing this message, the Lord reminded me that I do not spend nearly enough time in thanksgiving when one of our missionaries reports of people trusting Christ through his ministry. In Luke 15:10, Jesus said, "**Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.**" If this causes joy in the presence of the angels, then it ought to bring joy and thanks to our lips as we pray for them.

Transition: When praying for other Christians, for what are we to be thankful? We find the answer to this in Paul's example.

1. We are to be thankful for their faith, love, and hope

a. Thank God for their faith (v.4).

- 1) Faith in Christ Jesus is what converts a condemned sinner into a converted saint. Knowing that Christ Jesus died for our sins and rose again to give us eternal life does not save anyone. Many religious people have that knowledge, but lack saving faith.
- 2) Faith is acting upon trusted information. It is not until a person sees himself as guilty, condemned before God, and unable to resolve his guilt by any personal merit, that he can repent and by faith trust Christ.
- 3) When we hear of one who places his faith in Christ, we ought to thank God.

b. Thank God for their love (v.4)

- 1) When the Apostle Paul was converted, he immediately began to love and fellowship with those he formally hated and tried to kill.
- 2) When a person places his faith in Christ for salvation, God changes him from the inside out. He no longer loves the

fellowship of ungodly people. Jesus said that love for other saints would be an identifying mark of a true Christian (John 13:35).

- 3) We are to thank God for such love in others.

c. **Thank God for their hope (v.5)**

- 1) Prior to faith in Christ, the unbeliever has **no** hope for the future. Many unbelievers today live in fear of what the future holds.
- 2) When the Bible speaks of "**hope**" it is not speaking of a wish, but rather of a confident expectation. God gives all who have truly placed their faith in Christ Jesus a confident expectation of a better future.
- 3) Looking at our troubled world from a human perspective, things do not look good for our future, and especially not for our grandchildren. Those who leave God out of the picture have no hope in this world, nor in the eternal future.
- 4) However, if we view the future from God's perspective as revealed in Scripture, we CAN have hope. God has revealed much of the future in Bible prophecy, and we can see it unfolding before our eyes. Beyond the coming judgments is a hope in the heavens awaiting all true Christians! Thank God for their hope!

2. **We are to be thankful that they heard the Gospel**

a. **Thank God that they heard the truth (v.5)**

- 1) The truth is not in religion. It is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 identifies the Gospel for us. **"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:"**
- 2) Someone wisely said, "The Gospel is only good news if it reaches the sinner in time." Paul thanked God that the Colossian people heard the truth of the Gospel.
- 3) Thank God that YOU heard the Gospel, and then thank Him when you hear of others who have heard.

b. **Thank God for the witness who told them (v.7)**

- 1) God chose to use Christians to spread the Gospel. He could have used some other means, but He chose us.
- 2) Among those who shared the Gospel in Colosse was the preacher Epaphras (v.7). Paul called him a dear (i.e., beloved) fellowservant and a faithful minister of Christ.
- 3) As we pray for other Christians, we ought to thank God for the person or persons who shared the Gospel with them. At the same time, we must continue to take and make opportunities to share the Gospel with others.
 - a) I challenge you to take tracts with you as you go shopping. Seek opportunities to hand them out.
 - b) Keep tracts near your front door where you can reach them when someone knocks at your door. If you ask me, I will help you build a small tract rack to put on the wall near your door.
- 4) If you are thankful that someone shared the Gospel with you, let that motivate you to witness more consistently.

3. **We are to be thankful for fruit in their lives.**

a. **Thank God that the Gospel produced fruit (v.6)**

- 1) The Gospel reached Colosse as it was spreading throughout the known world.
- 2) It brought forth fruit of changed lives in Colosse.
- 3) It still produces the fruit of changed lives today. A person cannot truly receive the saving Gospel and remain the same kind of person.
- 4) When our missionaries and others share of the fruit of changed lives, thank God for those conversions!

b. **Thank God for continued Gospel fruit (v.6)**

- 1) Paul points out that the Gospel had changed their lives since the day they heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.
 - a) They heard the Gospel. It came to their ears. They listened attentively to it.
 - b) They knew the grace of God in truth. They became thoroughly acquainted with God's grace.
- 2) The Gospel continued to change their lives. This ought to