
We Always Give Thanks

Colossians 1:3-8

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. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, 7 just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf 8 and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

Paul starts his letter to the Colossians by telling them that he always gives thanks for them in his prayers. Although his circumstances (being in prison) were not ones that lent themselves to thanksgiving, Paul had learned to give thanks for the eternal rather than the temporal. We can look to Paul for an example of how to give thanks despite difficult, earthly circumstances.

- I. **Paul gave thanks for the effects of the Gospel in their lives (vv. 3-5)**
His words of thanks were not just pleasantries. He was genuinely thankful for the proof of the Gospel in their lives demonstrated through their faith in Christ Jesus and their love for all the saints, and he was thankful for the working out of the eternal hope in their lives that was laid up and secured in Heaven. They lived in light of that hope.
- II. **Paul also gave thanks for the extent of the Gospel's reach in the world (v. 6)**
The Gospel crosses all geographic, ethnic, and cultural boundaries. Paul's focus was on the redemptive story and not on the difficult circumstances of his life.
- III. **Paul was grateful for Epaphras, the emissary of the Gospel to them (vv. 7-8)**
The Lord brings the Gospel to people **through** people! Epaphras was not merely a messenger of the Gospel, but an emissary. Epaphras acted as one sent on a special mission as a direct representative of the Lord.

Discussion Questions

1. What keeps us from being thankful?
2. What is the fruit of the Gospel in our lives?
3. How is the biblical definition of the words, faith, hope, and love, different than the world's definition?
4. What does Paul mean when he says that the Gospel is bearing fruit in the whole world?

5. What is an emissary of the Gospel? How is that different than being a messenger of the Gospel?

Going Deeper

1. Who was that emissary of the Gospel to you?
2. Who, if anyone, is giving thanks for your being the emissary of the Gospel to them?
3. Who can you share the Gospel with this week?