



September 20, 2020 - Colossians 1:12; 2:7; 3:15,17

OPEN

When we tune into the news of our day it does not seem like a setting for being thankful. However, all followers of Jesus are commanded: “in everything give thanks”! (1 Thessalonians 5:18) Are we truly thankful? Is there any **evidence** in our lives that we are grateful to God?

If we put Paul’s epistles into a “thanksgiving shaped sieve”, a lot of material would fall through! For example, Philippians is itself a “thank you” letter. Paul’s letters to the early churches are saturated with **examples and exhortations** to give thanks. Interestingly, thankfulness is not a fruit of the Spirit. Nor do we find the word “thank” or “thankful” in Titus. Yet Paul used the term 36 times.

So, we will be conducting a sort of “CSI: Gratitude”. We will explore several epistles to uncover evidence of thanks in the believer’s life. To read the New Testament epistles carefully leaves no doubt that thanksgiving is foundational to our faith! We will see **seven evidences**.

Today we consider the evidence of joy which is not a frivolous feeling, but a deep, God produced state of the heart. In Colossians there are four ways that joy points to a thankful heart. The Greek word for “be thankful” is built from the word for **grace** which one author calls “everything about which one rejoices.” (**Dictionary of NT Theology**, Colin Brown, ed. Zondervan, 1971, 817)

DIG

1. Joy shows we are thankful for salvation - 1:12

What causes you to give thanks? Do you count tangible blessings? Are you grateful for certain relationships? Do you give thanks beyond gifts? Are you thankful for the Giver Himself? In Colossians 1:9-12, Paul offered a prayer for the spiritual growth of the Christians in Colossae. At the close of this prayer,

he highlighted “giving joyful thanks” (“joyful” is actually in verse 11). To whom was his thanks directed? To “the Father”. Almost exclusively Paul’s thanks was directed to God Himself. Why give thanks to the Father? Our thanks to our heavenly Father is due to the fact that He has “made us fit” or “qualified” for heaven!

And of course, as we read further, beginning in verse 13, the focus is upon our deliverance and rescue...which should elicit joyful thanks as we read about in verses 11-12!

We are going to see more of Paul’s profound gratitude for salvation and all those who partake in it. One of our sermons will be focused on the evidence of celebration – as Paul celebrated the faith of others.

You can join the celebration each month this fall. Please join in the [Prayer Connect](#) Zoom gatherings when we meet a ministry partner from abroad. Our first “**Prayer Connect**” is October 4, with special guest David Guretzki, who serves with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

2. Joy shows we are thankful for strength - 2:7

In Colossians 2:6 Paul argued, if you are **in** Christ you should walk **like** Christ. How does this play itself out? We must be “rooted, built up, strengthened” and what other quality? Thankfulness! But this is an “overflowing” of gratitude! Such an excess suggests the presence of great joy.

Many factors could have robbed the Colossians of their joy. False teaching, for one, had come into their congregation. One of the main purposes for Paul’s letter was to correct the notion that Jesus was not enough.

False teachers were promoting burdensome legalism and pagan practices. However, when are rooted in the Gospel, joy will be present. And joy always connects to a thankful heart.

3. Joy shows we are thankful for stability - 3:15

Another way the Colossians joy was attacked was simply by the rigor or life in the 1st Century. Political and racial tension was ever present. Neither Jews nor Romans were a friend to the Church. Yet Paul urged his readers to let God’s peace (saving peace and beyond) govern their lives and congregation.

Christ’s peace leads to joy. The call is to let peace be the rule of operation in the Body of Christ AND **be**(come) thankful! Do you see the connection? Joy is not just about sensational emotional experiences. It also is about quiet, calm, harmonious stability – and such is the heart that is thankful.

4. Joy shows we are thankful for service - 3:17

Do you like to serve? Do you serve with joy? Watch this short video from [Tessa DeBruyne](#), who serves on the staff of CLA Maple Ridge. How might we as a congregation serve our city? And how do we serve with joy?

What would our service be without joy...or thankfulness? It would be at best, mere duty. And at worse, it would become bitter! The final fact about joy as an evidence of thankfulness is the way it relates to our service for God. Are you joyful in what God has called you to do? Are you rejoicing in the place where He has called you to serve? The great Canadian missionary statesman Oswald J. Smith wrote these hymn lyrics...

*There is joy in serving Jesus as I journey on my way
Joy that fills my heart with praises every hour and every day
There is joy, joy, joy in serving Jesus
Joy that throbs within my heart
Every moment, every hour, as I draw upon His power
There is joy, joy, joy that never shall depart.*

But are we always joyful in our work for God? Lest we think that this is some naïve notion, consider what Smith also wrote in [The Man God Uses](#),

On...my thirty-eighth birthday, I prayed this prayer: "Lord, make me a man after Thine own heart" Work faded out of sight; things that before seemed important disappeared; everything in which I was interested took a secondary place, and my own inner life before God was all that mattered, all that was really worth while....the big thing was not the work I was doing, the books I was writing, the sermons I was preaching, the crowds that gathered nor the success achieved; but rather the life I was living, the thoughts I was thinking, heart holiness, practical righteousness; in a word: my transformation, by the Spirit, into Christ-likeness.

REFLECT

So, how are you going to get past the pumpkin spice latte this Thanksgiving season!? We need to take very seriously the call to rejoice in God!

A joyless Christian is a great tragedy. Why? Because where joy is absent, so also is thankfulness. God is quite serious when it comes to thanksgiving!

*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."
(Hebrews 12:28)*

Check out this article by Billy Graham "[How To Be Thankful In All Things](#)".

Here is an outline of the Scriptures we will consider in our series "Thankful"

1. The evidence of joy Colossians 1:12; 2:7; 3:15,17; Hebrews 12:28
2. The evidence of submission Ephesians 5:20; Romans 12:1-2; I Thess 5:18
3. The evidence of generosity II Corinthians 8:9; 9:11-12
4. The evidence of celebration Rom 6:17; I Cor 1:4; 15:57; II Cor 4:15; 9:15; Eph 1:15-16; Phil 1:3; Col 1:3,12; I Thess 3:9; II Thess 1:3; Rom 6:17
5. The evidence of freedom Rom 14:6,17; I Cor 10:30; Eph 5:4; I Tim 4:3-4
6. The evidence of intercession Phil 4:6; Col 4:2; I Cor 1:11 I Thess 1:2; I Timothy 2:1; II Timothy 1:3; Philipians 1:4
7. The evidence of witness Rom 1:8; I Cor 14:17; II Cor 2:14; 4:15; II Thess 1:3; 2:13