

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:  
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Swift Creek Baptist Church, 18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834  
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## Colossians 1:3-8, 12-14      “Reasons to Give Thanks”

Intro. Thursday is our national day of thanksgiving. In preparation for the observance of Thanksgiving, I wanted to preach a message about giving thanks. Now last Sunday I preached from Malachi about complaining. I pointed out that one way to stop being a complainer is to develop an attitude of gratitude. And one primary way that we can become habitually thankful is by a frequent contemplation of the reasons why we should be thankful. If we would think more, we would thank more! After all, there is always so much to be thankful for! That is why the psalmist called upon his soul to bless the Lord, “And forget not all His benefits” (Psalm 103:2). Then he began to name the benefits he had received from the Lord: forgiveness, healing, deliverance, satisfaction with good things, and renewal. So this morning, I will preach a message entitled, “Reasons to Give Thanks.” I want to lead you to give thanks by reminding you of what you should be thankful for.

As was customary Paul begins his letter with thanksgiving. He says in v.3, “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you....” Then, beginning in v.4, he gives some specific reasons why he could join them in giving thanks. I want you to see if you can thank God for the same blessings.

Before I get into the details, I want to make some general observations. First, the fact that Paul begins almost every letter with thanksgiving should teach us about the importance of thanksgiving. It must be important to God. It is also important for the enrichment of our everyday lives. Someone said, “Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend.”<sup>1</sup> Homer Lindsay Jr. was used of God to building one of the greatest churches in America, and one of his emphases was to teach his people to be thankful. It is so much more pleasant to be around people who are thankful and appreciative than those who are complainers.

Another observation is this: As Paul leads the Colossian believers in giving thanks, he focuses upon spiritual blessings, rather than material. All of us in this country should give thanks to God for material blessings. I believe I heard that the average yearly income in the world is about \$1,000, while even a person on welfare in our country has an income many times that. So we are all blessed to some degree in the material things of life. All of us should give thanks that we have food on the table, clothes on our back, and a place to live. But let’s focus this morning on the spiritual blessings that we should be thankful for. These are the blessings that have lasting value, and these are the blessings that bring real satisfaction. First of all, will you thank God for the blessing of:

### I. SALVATION

Notice that Paul was thankful for the salvation of these Colossian Christians. He said in v.4a, “Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus....” Of course, we are saved by faith, and the evidence of their faith was an evidence of their salvation. This was one church that Paul was not directly involved in starting. He had only heard of their saving faith from others. And when Paul heard of their faith in Christ, he was no doubt filled with joy and thanksgiving. We likewise should

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<sup>1</sup> Melody Beattie in *Beyond Codependency* from Quotable Quotes, *Readers Digest*.

be thankful for every soul that is saved. We should certainly be thankful for our own salvation.

We can more fully appreciate our salvation when we realize or remember what we have been saved from. In v.13 we see that Jesus is our great hero who rescued us from our terrible condition, and from the authority of darkness. The Bible teaches that Satan has a great deal of authority over this lost world (Mt. 4:8-9; Eph. 2:2). He even blinds that minds of unbelievers so that they will not be saved (2 Cor. 4:4). Our plight was so terrible we could not have escaped the grip of Satan on our own. We needed someone more mighty to rescue us! In fact, the word translated “redemption” in v. 14 means, “a releasing effected by payment of ransom,” or simply, “deliverance.”

In recent months we were excited to hear of the rescue of Private Jessica Lynch. She and her company of soldiers took a wrong turn and were ambushed by the enemy. Though injured, she survived the attack and was taken prisoner. Later, an Iraqi informant was concerned for her well-being, and revealed her location in a hospital. Some of our special forces swept in and rescued her from the enemy. They did for her what she could not do for herself. Even so, Jesus came to deliver us from the authority of the great enemy, Satan. He did for us what we could not do ourselves. Listen, if Satan has you bound with a drug or alcohol addiction, Jesus can set you free. If he had you bound by immorality, Jesus can set you free. If he had you bound with some other sin, Jesus can set you free!

Why do we need to be rescued? V.14 tells us. It is our own sin that condemns us. We need forgiveness of sin if we are to be saved. We need to be saved from the wages of sin, which is eternal death, from which there is no salvation. And we have much reason to be thankful, for God in Christ has provided redemption from sin by paying the wages of sin, death. That was the ransom price of our redemption. Now, we can be forgiven. That word literally means, “to send away.” God has taken our sins and has sent them away as if into the depths of the ocean.

And notice in v.13 that when God rescued us, He did not deliver us from Satan's power to be left on our own. In one great act of His redeeming love and power, He instantly translated us into the kingdom of His beloved Son. And notice that this is an accomplished fact. We should thank God for a salvation that is complete and secure.

Are you thankful for your salvation? This is the greatest, and most important blessing that we should be thankful for. Let's worship the Lord by singing together:

Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul,  
Thank you, Lord, for making me whole;  
Thank you, Lord, for giving to me  
Thy great salvation so rich and free.

Have you accepted this salvation from sin that God has provided for you? If not, you can today!

Now that next blessing that we should be thankful for is:

## II. BROTHERLY LOVE

Now in the last of v. 4, Paul also gave thanks since he “heard ... of your love for all the saints.” We should not be surprised to find saving faith and love linked closely together. “Love” is the fruit of faith and the proof of its genuineness (cf. Gal. 5:6, 22; James 2:14ff; I Jn. 3:14). The same Magnet, Christ Jesus, who attracts sinners to Himself and changes them into saints, simultaneously draws them into closer fellowship with each other. So we can expect that one of the primary fruits of salvation that Paul mentions is love. Jesus said in Jn. 13:35, “By this shall all men

know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Paul is thankful that *this* fruit of salvation was so evident in their lives. In fact, this is mentioned again by Paul in v. 8, “who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.” Love is a fruit of the Spirit. Paul is thankful to God because only God can create such a fellowship of *agape* love. Aren’t you thankful to belong to a loving fellowship of believers! I am thankful to see love manifest in this church.

Next, we should also be thankful to God for:

### III. OUR HEAVENLY HOPE

Another reason Paul is thankful is found in v.5, “because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.” Oh, what a wonderful hope we have as Christians! No matter how bad and difficult life becomes, we believers always have hope for something far better. In this case, the word “hope” refers to the object of our hope as Christians. In v.12 Paul refers to our heavenly hope as an inheritance. Rom. 8:17 says that we are even joint heirs with Jesus Christ. That means that we will inherit all of heaven jointly with Christ! According to the apostle Peter, this is an inheritance that is “incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (I Pet. 1:4). In fact, the word translated “laid up” in v.5 of our text (*apokeimai*) means “to be laid away, laid by, reserved.” We should thank God for this inheritance, for by nature an inheritance is a gift, not something we earn. Furthermore, an inheritance is something allotted to, conferred upon, a person by virtue of a relationship. Romans 8:17 says, “and if children, then heirs...” If you have not entered into a personal relationship with God by faith in Jesus Christ, then you are going to miss receiving this inheritance. Are you a child of God? If you are, then you can thank God in advance for the wonderful inheritance that awaits you! But understand, the only way to become a child of God is to believe in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

A wealthy man and his son loved to collect rare works of art. They had everything in their collection, from Picasso to Raphael. They would often sit together and admire the great works of art. When the Vietnam conflict broke out, the son went to war. He was very courageous and died in battle while rescuing another soldier. The father was notified and grieved deeply for his only son. About a month later, just before Christmas, there was a knock at the door. A young man stood at the door with a large package in his hands. He said, “Sir, you don’t know me, but I am the soldier for whom your son gave his life. He saved many lives that day, and he was carrying me to safety when a bullet struck him in the heart and he died instantly. He often talked about you, and your love for art. The young man held out his package. “I know this isn’t much. I’m not really a great artist, but I think your son would have wanted you to have this.” The father opened the package. It was a portrait of his son, painted by the young man. “He stared in awe at the way the soldier had captured the personality of his son in the painting. The father was so drawn to the eyes that his own eyes welled up with tears. He thanked the young man and offered to pay him for the picture. “Oh, no sir, I could never repay what your son did for me. It’s a gift.” The father hung the portrait over his mantle. Every time visitors came to his home, he took them to see the portrait of his son before he showed them any of the other great works he had collected.

The man died a few months later. There was to be a great auction of his paintings. Many influential people gathered, excited over seeing the great paintings and having an opportunity to purchase one for their collection. On the platform sat the painting of the son. The auctioneer pounded his gavel. “We will start the bidding with this picture of the son. Who will bid for this picture?” There was silence. “Then a voice in the back of the room shouted. “We want to see the famous paintings. Skip this one.” But the auctioneer persisted. “Will someone bid for this

painting? Who will start the bidding? \$100, \$200?" Another voice shouted angrily. "We didn't come to see this painting. We came to see the Van Goghs, the Rembrandts. Get on with the real bids!" But still the auctioneer continued. "The son! The son! Who'll take the son?" Finally, a voice came from the very back of the room. It was the longtime gardener of the man and his son. "I'll give \$10 for the painting." Being a poor man, it was all he could afford. "We have \$10, who will bid \$20?" "Give it to him for \$10. Let's see the masters." "\$10 is the bid, won't someone bid \$20?" The crowd was becoming angry. They didn't want the picture of the son. "They wanted the more worthy investments for their collections. The auctioneer pounded the gavel. "Going once, twice, SOLD for \$10!" A man sitting on the second row shouted. "Now let's get on with the collection!" The auctioneer laid down his gavel. "I'm sorry, the auction is over." "What about the paintings?" "I am sorry. When I was called to conduct this auction, I was told of a secret stipulation in the will. I was not allowed to reveal that stipulation until this time. Only the painting of the son would be auctioned. Whoever bought that painting would inherit the entire estate, including the paintings. The man who took the son gets every thing!"

God gave His Son 2,000 years ago to die on a cruel cross. Much like the auctioneer, His message today is, "The son, the son, who'll take the son?" Because, you see, whoever takes the Son gets everything.

Furthermore, the hope of a heavenly inheritance is not a fairy tale, or myth. Look again at v. 5b. It is based on "the word of the truth of the gospel." And the gospel is based on the sure hope provided by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So when we think about our wonderful inheritance, we should overflow with thanksgiving to God for His wonderful gift of heaven!

Now, let's look at another reason to give thanks. I'm afraid that not many of us are thanking God for this one:

#### IV. THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL

He said in v. 6 of the Gospel, "which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth." Even though Paul had not personally won these people to the Lord, he was thankful to God that the gospel had come to them and that more and more people were being saved. Furthermore, the rapid progress of the gospel in the early days has ever been the amazement of the historians. It has been estimated that by the close of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the total number of Christian disciples had reached half a million.

We should be thankful for the progress in our church. I would estimate that over 300 people have been saved through the ministry of this church. Thank God! We should also thank God for the progress of the Gospel in our world. We should thank God for our missionaries, who are winning more people to Christ in more countries than ever before. The Gospel is making great progress in Africa, Eastern Europe, South America, and in many other parts of the world.

Finally, Paul leads us in giving thanks for:

#### V. FAITHFUL CO-WORKERS

Another item in Paul's expression of thanksgiving is the work of Epaphras, whom Paul calls in v.7, "our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf." He is the one through whom the Colossians had been instructed in the Gospel. Paul could not take the Gospel to

all cities. He needed others to help him.

Isn't it a blessing to have fellow workers? Ron and I moved last weekend. We could not have done it alone. We are so thankful for the fellow workers we had.

We should be thankful to God for good Christian workers in our church. This church would not be where it is today without good workers and helpers. You should thank God for your Sunday School teacher. You should thank God for your church staff. You should thank God for your deacon. Thank God for faithful choir members who sing for us, and lead us in worship. Thank God for our AWANA workers. Thank God for those nursery workers, who make it possible for us to worship with fewer disturbances, and who enable moms to worship God with less distraction. Last Sunday we expressed appreciation for our grass cutters. We thank God for the faithful service of committee members.

Are you a co-worker in the church? Is someone giving thanks to God for you this morning?

Conclusion: We have so much to be thankful for, and we ought to practice thankfulness. Too often, we fail to be thankful. One year when Christmas Day came on a Sunday, a farmer decided to go to church. Like some people, he thought he was fulfilling his religious obligation by going to church twice a year—at Christmas and Easter! The sermon that day was preached from the text, “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his masters crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider” (Is. 1:3). Isaiah said that man is dumber than the animals. After church, the farmer returned home and stood among his cows. One of them began to lick his hand—a practical demonstration of the sermon he had just heard. Strong man though he was, the farmer began to weep as he thought, “God did much more for me, and yet I never thanked Him. My cow is far more grateful than I am. What do I ever give her other than grass and water?”<sup>2</sup> Let us not fail to thank Him every day, and in every way!

Sources: Notes from author's sermon tape of 11/24/91; William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, inc. Colossians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953); Curtis Vaughan, *Colossians: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 15 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); Warren W. Wiersbe, "Be" Series: *New Testament Volumes 1 & 2, Colossians* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989); Lehman Strauss, "Prayer & Thanksgiving" in *Sense & Nonsense about Prayer* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible 8.0 [CD-ROM]* (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). McGee not helpful.

#### ABOUT THESE SERMON NOTES

This document has not been transcribed from an audio recording, but is the result of the sermon preparation process. Most outlines are original to the author, but much of the content of the notes are taken from commentaries, other sermons, and Bible study aids (see sources above). Sermons are preached without notes, and thus the content of the "live" sermon is in the author's own words. To get an audio recording of this message, you may send \$1 for each audio cassette tape ordered, plus \$3 shipping & handling for each order mailed in. Up to 2 messages come on each cassette. Make checks payable to Swift Creek Baptist Church, P.O. Box 235, Colonial Heights, VA 23834.

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<sup>2</sup> *Illustrations of Bible Truths* © 1995, 1998 AMG Publishers.