

Thank You
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United Church of Broomfield
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Colossians 1:1-14 Common English Bible

From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy our brother.
To the holy and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae.
Grace and peace to you from God.

We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. We've done this since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all God's people. You have this faith and love because of the hope reserved for you in heaven. You previously heard about this hope through the true message, the good news, which has come to you. This message has been bearing fruit and growing among you since the day you heard and truly understood God's grace, in the same way that it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world. You learned it from Epaphras, who is the fellow slave we love and Christ's faithful minister for your sake. He informed us of your love in the Spirit.

Because of this, since the day we heard about you, we haven't stopped praying for you and asking for you to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. We're praying this so that you can live lives that are worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way: by producing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God; by being strengthened through his glorious might so that you endure everything and have patience; and by giving thanks with joy to the Father. He made it so you could take part in the inheritance, in light granted to God's holy people. He rescued us from the control of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. He set us free through the Son and forgave our sins.

V1-2: An introduction

- Very typical of Paul's letters and many letters of the time.
- It is interesting to note that Paul had never been to Colossae but based his letter on all that he'd heard of the church there.

V3-8: thanks to God for you

- Your Faith in Jesus Christ
- Your Love for all God's people
- Your Hope in embracing God's grace in the gospel
- Your Good Works: Being the fruits of the spirit since first hearing the gospel

Because of your faith, your love and your hope

V9-14: prayer for you

- Receive knowledge of God's will
- Receive all wisdom
- Receive spiritual understanding

As I was doing my study and research on this passage, it was interesting that so many commentaries and sermons focus on this passage from the perspective of FAITH AND WORKS. I'm sure you're all somewhat familiar with this conundrum, right?

- Paul said that salvation is by faith alone and not by works.
- Then in the book of James, he said, faith without works is dead. It seems to be a contradiction of Paul, but it's truly an affirmation...
 - If faith is real and genuine, then by relying on Jesus Christ, faith will lead us to produce good fruit. Genuine faith results in good works.

So many of the commentaries interpreted this scripture as - Paul is reminding the Colossians on the pitfalls of faith and works.

- PAUL says we ought to be thankful to God for all that God does and for the work being done in the church in Colossae.
- "Yes thank you for all that you do, BUT DON'T FORGET THAT GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL WE DO. Don't get too proud with your work and forget that God gave you faith and that faith is bearing fruit."

I don't think that there is anything wrong with this interpretation or approach when preaching from this text. IT IS important for us to always remember how God is such a vital part of our lives and as it says in James 1:17, "Every good gift, every perfect gift, comes from above." God is the source of our faith and therefore the reason for our good works. I think the common approach with this scripture is to preach a "cautionary tone" is because there is so much "thanking" going on and as a preacher, I'm supposed to humble you. Do good, but don't get cocky!

Having said this, I want to take a slightly different perspective and approach by not being so humble. Instead I want to thank you, with no conditions or cautionary warnings or "thank you, but"

In today's world it's very hard to be the church. From the outside...

- The "CHURCH" gets beat-up quite a bit for being "institutionalized or organized religion"
 - Too formal, too hierarchical, too dogmatic, too bureaucratic and too systematic. "Church" has become a dirty word to many folks.
 - Denominations are labeled:

- Homophobic
 - Sexist
 - Hypocritical
 - _____
- From the inside, the “church” gets beat-up also
 - Congregants come to church week after week to hear about how awful it is OUT THERE with...
 - Homelessness
 - Hunger
 - Poverty
 - Oppression
 - Xenophobia
 - And you need to give money, time and resources ... and then come back again next week to hear the same thing and be expected to give more.

All of this is true. The world can be a rough place. The church can be in a tough position. The church isn't perfect. Sometimes it seems like it never gets better. You ARE needed – your money, your time and your resources. TRUE, TRUE, TRUE. All of this is true.

So...to parody Paul's letter to the Colossians I say...

***From Michael, a pastor in the United Church of Christ
To the holy and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Broomfield
Grace and peace to you from God.***

I give thanks to God when I pray for you. You have Christ's faith and love because of the hope reserved for you in heaven. You've heard the good news. It is bearing fruit and growing among you.

I thank you for:

- Visiting with those who are ill
- Welcoming visitors
- Volunteering to read scripture, give a children's sermon or make coffee for fellowship
- Making meals for others
- Painting the sanctuary
- Mowing the lawn
- Volunteering time at A Precious Child
- Working at the lawnmower clinic
- Creating art for our worship space
- Lighting and dousing candles during worship
- Decorating the altar
- Preparing slides
- Buying a sump pump to fix the drain

- Sharing your musical talents
- Organizing social events
- Taking action in the community
- Running a pre-school program
- Preparing the communion table
- Tithing
- Pulling weeds and watering plants and flowers
- Shampooing carpets
- Interviewing job applicants
- Coming to church council
- Tending the peace garden
- Teaching Sunday School and Bible Studies
- Donating to FISH
- Showing up
- Bearing your hearts and souls

I THANK YOU

Since the day I heard about you, I've prayed for you and asked you to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. I'm praying this so that you can live lives that are worthy and pleasing to the Lord; by producing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God; by being strengthened through God's glorious might so that you endure everything and have patience; and by giving thanks with joy to God. God made it so you could take part in the inheritance, in light granted to God's holy people. God rescued us from the control of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son so loved. God set us free through the Son and forgave our sins.

AMEN