

THE FIRST 15

Friday, November 29, 2024

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Today is Friday, November 29 and during the week of Thanksgiving we are exploring what the Bible says about gratitude and thankfulness.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed and Holy Lord God, in the morning my heart sings of Your faithfulness. I welcome Your gentle presence and rest in Your goodness. I breathe slowly and deeply, quieting the voices of my busy mind and listening for the message You have for me today. I pause to remember and count my many blessings. I rejoice with gratitude for Your steadfast love and faithfulness. You have given me so much and I am filled with thanksgiving. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. Colossians 2:5-7

REFLECTION

In his letter, Paul reminds the Colossian believers as well as you and me of what is central to our lives - Jesus Christ. In this passage we find the heart of the Gospel - God's gracious deliverance of humanity through the suffering, death and resurrection of His one and only Son, Jesus. Because of Jesus we are no longer captive to the ways of the world, we are on the side of triumph. Because of Jesus we can reject the present order of things, and seek to live out an alternative mode of existence. When we accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior we enter a new way of being, of doing, of living. The Gospel is a way of life. We live *in* Christ.

Perhaps we can compare our life in Christ to the ancient people of Colossae - the early Christians, our brothers and sisters in the faith. Paul delights to see how disciplined they are. How is my self-discipline when it comes to the life of faith? Paul is pleased to see how firm their faith is in Jesus. How firm is my faith? Do I find a strong foundation amid daily troubles, challenges and concerns or do I quickly give way to uncertainty, worry and fear?

Paul encourages the Colossians how to live. This encouragement passes down through the ages and comes fresh to my ears. I am to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior and continue to live my life in Him moment by moment, day in and day out. What does that look like? Paul uses four verbs to describe what the daily living of life looks like.

First, we are to be *rooted* in Him. Like the roots of a tree that push deep beneath the surface where others cannot see. The roots press underground into the soil and draw essential nutrients to nourish what is visible, the part of the tree that struggles against the winds, and storms and rain. Second, we are to be *"built up"* in Christ. Not constructed in our own power, with our own

design, our own inclinations or motivations. We are built up into a holy temple for the Spirit to dwell in Christ. Third, we are to be *strengthened* in the faith. Not strengthened in any newfangled, untested, ungrounded faith, but the faith we were taught as new believers. The faith that was passed down from the Apostles to our generation. The faith of the Church of Jesus through the ages. Fourth, we are to *overflow* with thankfulness.

In this week of Thanksgiving, as we have been studying everything the Bible teaches about gratitude, this is a great verse for us to end on. We are to overflow with thankfulness. That is the kind of gratitude that is not just a drop in the bucket, not a mere trickle, not a momentary pouring out, it is an abundance of thankfulness that continually overflows from the heart of a believer. A great portion of sanctifying grace is just that - thankfulness that pours into our heart as a gift of the Holy Spirit until we are filled to overflowing and then that thankfulness pours out from us into the lives of others.

Ask: How can I open my heart to receive the gift of thankfulness from the Holy Spirit of God? How might it look for that thankfulness to overflow from me into the lives of the people around me?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy and loving God, give me a heart that overflows with thankfulness. Remind me of my many blessings and let me live a life of gratitude. Through the power of Your Holy Spirit, sanctify me through and through in Your great love. Enable me to grow inspired by the ancient words of the truth of Your word - improve my self-discipline, make my faith firm, root my life in Christ, build me up in Christ, and strengthen my faith in Christ. So that I can continue to live my life in Him and give You honor, glory and praise. Amen.