

Col 4:2

"Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving." ESV
Thanksgiving Part 2

Thanksgiving is to prayer what oil is to an engine. What a sea anchor is to a boat or ship in rough seas. I am convinced that thanksgiving is an under recognized spiritual discipline. We heard last Sunday that it is the **tenor of our worship**. Today we will see that thanksgiving is the **anchor of our prayers**. We see this not only in Col 4:2 but also in **Phil 4:6**, “⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”, and **1 Thess 5:16-18**, “¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” Thanksgiving is indeed the anchor of our prayers. After considering this for a while I asked the question, “Why couple prayer with thanksgiving?”. I think I have the answer. Three reasons.

First reason, thanksgiving energizes our prayer. V4:2a “Continue steadfastly in prayer”. Why would Paul give such an instruction? Why would the Church at Colosse need to be encouraged to be constant in prayer? To keep at it. To not let up. Two words, distraction and discouragement. **Thanksgiving keeps these at bay while we wait because it points our attention to all that God has done, all that truly matters and nothing more magnificent than his grace bestowed upon us through faith in his Son, Jesus.** Because of Christ, we always have reason to render thanksgiving to God, regardless of what we may be enduring. Thanksgiving has a way of putting everything in proper perspective. Thus, not

allowing distraction or discouragement to have its way while we wait, or as I text states watch. So, when we pray, we are to replay in our minds the blessing of God upon our lives. And the chief blessing being the gift of salvation.

Psalm 103:1-4 “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! ²Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.” **ESV**

Psalm 68:19 “Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loads us with benefits, The God of our salvation!” **NKJV**

Setting our minds on the benefits of God given to us through faith in His Son, Jesus, is a great aid to us in prayer. This is what thanksgiving does.

Second reason, thanksgiving gives our minds proper focus while we wait. V4:2b “being watchful in it with thanksgiving”. Thanksgiving is a powerful reminder that God/Jesus hasn’t brought us this far to leave us now. It is while we are waiting that our minds have the tendency to wander into chaos. To wander into dooms day thinking, worst case scenarios. Thanksgiving can keep us from ruminating on the particulars of our circumstances, especially in times of trouble by redirecting our minds to the goodness of God/Jesus. It matters greatly what we think about at all times, but especially in unwelcomed circumstances. As we were told this week in our final noon session on Practicing the Way- Reading Scripture, “remember’ is the number one commandment in all of scripture. And thanksgiving is all about remembering who God is and what God/Christ has done!

Isaiah 26:3-4 “You will keep *him* in perfect peace, Whose mind *is* stayed on You, Because he trusts in You. ⁴Trust in the Lord forever, For in Yah, the Lord, *is* everlasting strength.”

1 Chron 16:12-13 “Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth, ¹³O seed of Israel His servant, You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!” **NKJV**

Psalm 77:11-15 “I will remember the works of the Lord; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. ¹²I will also meditate on all Your work, And talk of Your deeds. ¹³Your way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary; Who *is* so great a God as *our* God? ¹⁴You *are* the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the peoples. ¹⁵You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, The sons of Jacob and Joseph.” **NKJV**

Final reason, thanksgiving anchors us in turbulent times. **V4:2** “²Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.” Like a sea anchor, thanksgiving keeps us from becoming overwhelmed by rough seas. I believe thanksgiving enables us to remove of ourselves from the center of our circumstances and place God/Jesus there. To do this is to believe that God/Christ is at work in our circumstance bringing to fruition his good purposes for our lives. And so, when we find ourselves in difficult situations we pray...Lord, I don't know what you are doing. I don't understand. It does not feel good and I certainly wish this was not the case, but I believe your word is true. I trust you are at the center of this thing bringing about your good pleasure. And though I am crying right now I will believe what your word promises in **Psalm 30:5**, “weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning”. And though this situation is almost unbearable I will do what **James 1:2-3** instructs, “Count

it all joy, when you meet trials of various kinds,³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness". And though I can't even imagine how this will work out for my good I will trust you at your word in **Roman 8:28** for it declares, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose". Thanksgiving anchors us in turbulent times by turning our attention to the goodness of God, of Jesus the Christ.

Listen, whatever our situations or our station in life, as disciples of Jesus the Christ, we must learn to set our minds on him. In every season of life and in every circumstance rendering thanksgiving to God/Jesus will aid us greatly in this. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**