

UPGRADING OUR GRATITUDE

OVERFLOWING THANKFULNESS



The issue is not only whether I am grateful, but how gratitude is manifested in my life. By biblical standards, true gratitude is expressed, is measurable and quantifiable, and a key defining standard of a true follower of Christ.

THE MEASURE OF GRATITUDE

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, overflowing with thankfulness.

—COLOSSIANS 2.6-7

► Thankfulness will be evident in the life of one who is “in Christ.”

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

—ROMANS 1.21

. . . and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

—COLOSSIANS 1.12

We can never overstate the importance of “evidence” (or proof) in a Christian’s life. Jesus said:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. . . . This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (JOHN 15.1-2, 8)

To the Christians at Corinth, the Apostle Paul wrote:

Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. (2 CORINTHIANS 9.13)

If someone is truly in Christ, there will be evidence of Christ's life within that person—the branch always duplicates the life of the vine—and a chief characteristic of the Christ-life is manifested thankfulness. Further on in his letter to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul, in describing what it means to reflect the image and knowledge of Christ, wrote:

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. . . . And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

—Colossians 3.15, 17

- ▶ Just as thankfulness must be evident and not merely assumed, it is also measurable. According to the Apostle Paul, it is a clear indicator of one's spiritual development: "overflowing with thankfulness."
 - ▶ "thankfulness" (Colossians 2.7): *euchristia* - the act of giving thanks: conversation marked by the gentle cheerfulness of a grateful heart.
 - ▶ "thankful" (Colossians 3.15): *euchristos* - grateful; mindful of benefits (cf. Psalm 103.2)

- ▶ “overflowing” (Colossians 2.7): *perisseuo* - ⁽¹⁾ to be over and above; ⁽²⁾ to exist in full quantity; to be abundant; ⁽³⁾ to increase, be augmented; ⁽⁴⁾ to be advanced, more prominent; ⁽⁵⁾ to be possessed in full sufficiency. It is the same word used in Romans 5.15: *But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!*

Just as there are markers of physical health and development, the measure of thankfulness reveals whether one is growing in Christ or spiritually deficient.

HOW DO WE UPGRADE OUR GRATITUDE?

- ▶ As you read the letters of the Apostle Paul, it is evident that he was overflowing with thankfulness. He was thankful for God's grace in his own life and thankful for the prayers of others on his behalf. He was aware of the spiritual growth of others and wrote to tell them that he "never stopped giving thanks" for their developing faith and increasing love. He was thankful for relationships and partnerships in the work of spreading the good news of Christ. *And people knew this because he wrote to tell them!* His example, taken to heart and put into practice, will help us overflow with thanksgiving.