

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Day 08

Gratitude for Brethren Who Accept the Truth

Paul was extremely grateful for his brothers and sisters in Christ. He devoted his life to preaching the Gospel to those who had never heard it. When someone heard and accepted it as the Word of God, Paul was overjoyed and filled with gratitude.

To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote: *“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe”* (1 Thessalonians 2:13). He had labored to teach, exhort, and comfort them. Now, he was able to express gratitude for them because they accepted the Truth of the Gospel.

They were able to discern that Paul’s message was not the word of men, but was in truth the Word of God. This demonstrates the power of the Gospel and the power of the miracles that confirmed it. God’s Word continues to have power! Paul declared that it “effectually” works in those who believe. God works powerfully in the hearts and lives of His children (Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 13:20-21). Paul showed how God works – through the power of His Gospel (cf. Romans 1:16; Colossians 1:29) and the power of prayer (James 5:16).

The Gospel has the power to change lives! It turned the Thessalonians from idolaters to followers of the one, true God (1 Thes. 1:9). It led them to faith, repentance, and obedience. They found salvation when they answered the call of the Gospel. *“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). It was continuing to work in their lives by motivating faithfulness and endurance in the face of persecution.

Thus, Paul was bound (obligated) to give thanks for them. He lost many friends when he became a follower of Christ. Yet, he was grateful for every honest heart that became his brother in Christ through the power of the Gospel.

## Growing Gratitude

Today, say a prayer of thanks for all those throughout the world who have accepted the Truth of the Gospel. Often, like Elijah, we think that we stand alone as Christians. However, there are many who have not “bowed the knee” to Baal (Romans 11:2-4). Give thanks for our sister congregations and support them at every opportunity.

*“BUT WE ARE BOUND TO GIVE THANKS ALWAYS TO GOD FOR YOU, BRETHREN BELOVED OF THE LORD...” (2 THESSALONIANS 2:13A)*

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Day 09

Gratitude for Brethren Who Are Faithful – 1

Paul was sometimes heartbroken over brethren who abandoned the Truth, ceased laboring for the Lord, or went back into the world of sin. He still loved those brethren and sought their repentance. But, he was profoundly grateful for brothers and sisters in Christ who remained faithful to the Lord.

*“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God”* (1 Thessalonians 1:2-4). *“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth”* (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

Paul was thankful for his faithful brethren in Thessalonica. In expressing his gratitude for them, he shows what it means to be faithful to the Lord. The faithful put their faith to work. A work of faith is toil that is motivated by one’s trust in God.” A labor of love is working even to the point of pain, motivated by one’s compassion and love for God and neighbor. Patience of hope refers to cheerful endurance motivated by the hope of salvation. All of these were demonstrated in the life of the Thessalonian Christians (1 Thes. 1:8-10).

Furthermore, their faith continued to grow exceedingly, and their love abounded! To be faithful, one must live a life of obedient service. He must seek out opportunities to do the will of God. He must mature and grow in his dedication and service. Then, like the Thessalonians, he will be an example to the world – one for which all other Christians can be thankful.

## Growing Gratitude

Today, we will grow our gratitude by memorizing 1 Thessalonians 1:2. Learn this verse and commit it to memory. Repeat it throughout the day. As you meditate upon it, let it encourage you to give thanks for faithful brethren. Where would we be without those who work, labor, and endure for the cause of Christ? Where would we be without those who allow their faith, love, and hope to guide them in setting an example before us and the world? Let us give thanks for faithful brethren.

*“WE GIVE THANKS TO GOD ALWAYS FOR YOU ALL, MAKING MENTION OF YOU IN OUR PRAYERS”* (1 THESSALONIANS 1:2),

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Day 10

Gratitude for Brethren Who Are Faithful – 2

Paul wrote to the church at Rome, expressing gratitude for them and their faithfulness to God. In fact, he wrote that their faith was spoken of throughout the world. “*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world*” (Romans 1:8).

This statement is powerful – but even more so when one considers the origin of the church at Rome. Paul declared that he prayed that God’s will would be that he could visit his brethren in Rome. He wanted to do this so he could impart to them spiritual gifts (Romans 1:9-13). This shows that Paul had never visited the church at Rome, and he was not responsible for its founding. Furthermore, no other Apostle was with the church at Rome – else there would have been no need for Paul to give them miraculous abilities.

Yet, despite this fact, their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world! One does not need to be an Apostle of Christ to have a powerful influence. One need not be a “professional” preacher to shine the light of Truth into a world of darkness. One need not be an elder or deacon to have a reputation for faithfulness that is known in the community and abroad. When all Christians in all positions use all their talents, they become a beacon of faithfulness in all the world!

## Growing Gratitude

Today, meditate upon Jesus statement: “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 5:16). Now, think of someone who has been a light – an example of godliness – in your life. Take a moment to express to them your gratitude for their influence. Write a letter or a card; send a text; make a phone call; message them through the computer. Like Paul, we should be glad to let others know that we are thankful for them and that we thank God for their encouragement.

Secondly, think of how brightly or dimly your light is shining. Is your faith spoken of throughout the world? Is it known in the community? What are ways that you can have a stronger influence on your neighbors, co-workers, and friends? How can you let your light shine?

*“FIRST, I THANK MY GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST FOR YOU ALL, THAT YOUR FAITH IS SPOKEN OF THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD” (ROMANS 1:8),*

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

## Day 11

### Gratitude for Brethren Who Are Faithful – 3

Paul cared for the church and prayed for it constantly. He wanted congregations to grow and mature so they could work and serve, bringing honor and glory to God. Yet, the early church faced many challenges and difficulties.

The church at Colossae was bombarded with religious error on many fronts. There were things that needed to be condemned and corrected. Still, Paul began his letter to them with encouragement. He prayed always and gave thanks for them.

*“We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel”* (Colossians 1:3-5). Though Paul was not with them, had never met many of them, and may have never even been to Colossae, he still prayed and gave thanks for his brethren. *“For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ”* (Colossians 2:5).

There are two important lessons to be learned from Paul’s gratitude for the Colossians. First, Paul was thankful for all Christians, whether he knew them personally or not. When he heard of a faithful brother, sister, or congregation, Paul gave thanks to God! We should have the same attitude of gratitude.

Second, Paul had faith in his brethren. Things were not perfect in Colossae, but the church was striving for faithfulness. Paul believed in them – he believed that they would be victorious and remain true to God and His Word. Thus, he sought to encourage them by expressing his gratitude for them. We need to be an encouragement to our brethren also, seeking their faithfulness. Let us express our gratitude for faithful brethren.

## Growing Gratitude

Today, think of congregations that you may have heard of, but have never visited. Think of brethren in other lands and other countries that you will likely never meet in this life. Give thanks for them. To show your gratitude, take the time today to pray for and to write a note of encouragement to an evangelist in another community or a missionary in a distant land. Let them know how grateful you are for their work. Thank them for teaching sinners who become our faithful brethren!

*“FOR THOUGH I BE ABSENT IN THE FLESH, YET I AM WITH YOU IN THE SPIRIT...”*  
(COLOSSIANS 2:5).

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

## Day 12

### Gratitude for Brethren Who Are Faithful – 4

Paul was in prison for preaching the Gospel of Christ. Yet he continued to pray and to give thanks for his faithful brethren. One of those brothers was a man named Philemon.

Paul wrote to him: *“I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus”* (Philemon 1:4-6). He was thankful to God for the love, faith, and service of Philemon.

Paul emphasized that Philemon’s love was both toward the Lord and all Christians. This was important because Paul was writing about a man who had just obeyed the Gospel and become a Christian. This man was Onesimus, a slave owned by Philemon. Onesimus had run away, had met Paul in Rome, had heard the Gospel from him, and had become a Christian. Now, he was coming back to his master as a brother in Christ. How would Philemon react? How would he treat his new spiritual brother?

Paul trusted that Philemon would respond as a Christian should. He prayed that the fellowship of his faith would work powerfully as he demonstrated to others all the good things that are in Christ. He would not seek to deny those blessings to Onesimus. He would not treat him poorly now that they enjoyed fellowship in Christ. Paul was thankful for the good heart and faithfulness of Philemon. He concluded his letter by stating: *“Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say”* (Philemon 1:21).

## Growing Gratitude

Today, we will grow gratitude by writing Scripture. This helps to engrave it in our hearts. It also gives us time to focus and think deeply about the verse. Write out the text of 2 Thessalonians 3:4:

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*“AND WE HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD TOUCHING YOU, THAT YE BOTH DO AND WILL DO THE THINGS WHICH WE COMMAND YOU” (2 THESSALONIANS 3:4).*

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

## Day 13

### Gratitude for Brethren Who Are Faithful – 5

Paul worked with the church in Ephesus for about three years. About five years after he left the city, he wrote to them. In his epistle, Paul declared his gratitude for these faithful brethren. “*Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers*” (Ephesians 1:15-16).

In the time he had been away from them, Paul had heard of their faith. Notice that their faith was something that could be seen and discussed. He had heard of their actions which demonstrated their faith. True faith is active – it works (James 2:17-20).

The same was true of their love for the saints. Love is expressed in deeds and actions (Galatians 5:6). This is what it means to be faithful. A faithful Christian is one who live by faith with love toward his brethren. These are not mere sentiments, but motives for one’s works of service.

When Paul heard of their faithfulness, he gave thanks for them. He mentioned them in prayer, taking their name and their good deeds before the throne of God in Heaven. Like Paul, we should be thankful for faithful brethren.

## Growing Gratitude

Today, our exercise in gratitude is to pray for the congregation of which we are members. The book of Ephesians is a book about the nature and importance of the church. As Christians, we must cherish and respect the Lord’s church. We must show gratitude for the local congregation. Pray for your elders and their work in shepherding the flock. Pray for your deacons as they labor to serve and carry out the work of the local church. Pray for your preachers and their work of proclaim the Gospel. Pray for Bible class teachers and their responsibility of guiding minds in study of God’s Word. Pray for each member – for their faithfulness, their growth, their strength, their perseverance, their service, their struggles, and their victory. Express your gratitude to God for the church that makes up your spiritual family.

“*EVEN SO FAITH, IF IT HATH NOT WORKS, IS DEAD, BEING ALONE*” (JAMES 2:17).

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

## Day 14

### Gratitude for Brethren Who Are Faithful – 6

Paul seems to have had no closer relationship in the church than with his “son in the faith,” Timothy (1 Timothy 1:2). Timothy and Paul were “likeminded” brethren, servants, co-workers, and friends (Philippians 2:20). Paul was grateful for his faithful brother Timothy.

*“To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2 Timothy 1:2-5).*

Paul thanked God for his “dearly beloved son.” He remembered Timothy in daily prayer. He desired to visit with him, to enjoy his fellowship. He was thankful for Timothy’s genuine faith. Timothy is a powerful example of true faithfulness to the Lord.

We should all desire to have a brother and co-worker like Timothy. We should be thankful for those who join us in the battle for the cause of Christ. We should pray for them, long for their company, and express gratitude to them for their faithfulness.

On the other hand, we all should strive to be a brother like Timothy. We should be loyal to Christ and His church. We should be an encouragement to our brethren by standing for and living the Truth of God’s Word. We should seek to work together for the cause of righteousness. And we should be grateful for one another.

## Growing Gratitude

Today, we will exercise our gratitude in song. There are two songs to sing and to meditate upon. The first is “Blest Be the Tie,” written by John Fawcett. The lyrics emphasize the unity and fellowship we enjoy as brothers and sisters in Christ. Secondly, consider the words of “How Sweet, How Heavenly, Is the Sight,” written by Joseph Swain. Again, this song reminds us of the strength and encouragement we find in our faithful brethren. Sing these two songs today. Think carefully about the lyrics. And, as always, express your gratitude for faithful brethren.

*“FOR I HAVE NO MAN LIKEMINDED, WHO WILL NATURALLY CARE FOR YOUR STATE”  
(PHILIPPIANS 2:20).*