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## THE PATH TO GRATEFUL

Colossians 3:12-17

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Let's pray. Father, we give you this morning. It is yours already. We just acknowledge, God, that everything that we do, say, and think during this time – we want it to be glorifying to you. Would you help steward this time? Make it fruitful. Help us, God, to not tune out or to turn off, but to lean in to your word, to hear what you have to teach us this morning. God, the path to grateful is challenging in us, and I pray, God, that you would birth in us a renewed sense of praise and grateful worship to you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Last year, Microsoft (you might have heard of them) did a study. I'm not sure why they did this study, but they published a study that found that humans have a shorter attention span than goldfish. Yep. I don't know how they figured it out, but they figured it out and they actually published an article on it. Apparently, goldfish are notorious for having a short attention span, and their attention span, from what has been found, is 9 seconds.

Before the massive influx of mobile devices in our lives, we used to be able to boast a robust 12 second attention span. Since these things have flooded our lives and we have screens around us everywhere, now we are at 8 seconds. We have an 8 second attention span.

What does this show? This shows us that we have to work hard to stay focused and attentive on almost everything. About every 8 seconds we have to remind ourselves to pay attention. We have to regroup our minds to focus on whatever it is that we are doing. So that means within this time I

have lost many of you about 5 times. You're like, "What's he talking about? I wasn't paying attention."

Thanksgiving approaches. It is a wonderful holiday and we love it. Hopefully you love it. For some people, the holiday season, or maybe even this holiday isn't always a cause for joy for one reason or another. I know for me, my father died on Thanksgiving in 1985, on the date. But, that has not altered, at least at this point in my life, the greatness of this holiday, because I think there is something about Thanksgiving. There is something about this time of year that awakens us. Hopefully it forces us to think deeper about what we are thankful for. It forces us to engage in an area where I think most of us have a struggle. Whether or not this time of year has bad memories or good memories, in general, being grateful is not a strength of the human race. If our attention span only lasts 8 seconds, I wonder how we could measure our grateful span. I would think it's probably not much longer than our attention span.

Generally speaking, I think we have a deficiency in our ability to be thankful and to communicate gratitude. We tend to focus on the problems of life more than focus on the areas that cause us to be grateful. It's human nature. It's not one of the better parts of our human nature, because one of the central characteristics of the Christian life is gratitude, is gratefulness, is thanksgiving. One commentator, one thinker, one theologian named NT Wright says, "**The center of Christian living is grateful worship.**" **It's what we are put on this earth to do -- to give God glory, to enjoy him, to praise him, to thank him for all that he has done.**

**Martin Luther said that gratitude was *the basic Christian attitude*.** It is a defining marker for us. And as much as I want us to focus this morning on the Christian mandate to be thankful, I also think it's important to note that this is just built into the fabric of our society, of our nature, that this is an important thing. One of the first things we try to teach our children, when they're children is manners. It's just basic. "You're a kid. You're going to learn how to say 'thank you.' If someone does something nice to you, you use your manners and you say 'thank you.'" We say it all the time. "Use your manners. Say thank you," and our kids embarrass us the whole way through.

But now here's where the rub comes in, because we are trying to do more than just create an automatic response to something. "Okay, someone gave you this - say 'thank you.' 'Thank you.'" We are not just trying to create that automatic response. We are hoping for something deeper to happen. We do this all the time. Some of us are conditioned at times to just say things back. "How

are you doing?” “Fine. How are you?” “Good. How are you?” Have you ever had that encounter where it goes back and forth? You are like, “I think I said that already?” “Good. How are you?” “I’m great. How are you?”

Do we even care how they are doing? It just comes out right away, like “Yeah, good. Have a good trip.” “You too. Oh, you’re not going on a trip, right? Okay.” We are forced to use our manners all the time. We don’t just want to do that. We want there to be good things going on inside of us so that we are genuinely affected by whatever is happening around us, especially if it’s something worth gratitude. We want to teach genuine appreciation for what’s happening. We don’t want just words.

One of the hardest things to do is to get our kids to be grateful, and as frustrated as we can get at them for either whining or grumbling or complaining, just face it: We all do this. We have a deficiency in this area and our 8 second attention spans need to be led on a path towards grateful, towards thankfulness, towards gratitude. We need constant reminders of it to be grateful. **We should be and need to be a people defined by grateful worship.** Thankfulness, thanksgiving should always be on the tips of our tongues. It can be trained and it needs to be trained. It needs to penetrate deep in all of us so that we can be people who are grateful.

That’s what we get in this passage. It’s sort of a road map to being grateful. Today we are just going to look at verses 12 through 14, then next week we are going to pick up at 15, 16, and 17. What I want to point out this week is that Paul tells us something about the path to being grateful. I want to point out that you saw in the context of this passage, from 12 through 17, three times he mentions being thankful. In 12, 13, and 14 we don’t specifically see him saying something about gratefulness there, but we see it in the greater context of this passage. Paul is pushing us towards understanding that all of this has to do with this basic Christian attitude of being grateful, of being thankful.

So Paul tells us about three things on the path to being grateful:

- I. **A renewed life.**
- II. **A reformed justice.**
- III. **A revolutionized love.**

So let's jump in.

- I. In verse 12 we see him talking about a renewed life. Look at what he says. He says, "Put on then,

as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience." What causes gratitude in us? I want you to think about that. I want you to think about what makes you thankful, what makes you grateful, because it can be different for the person to the left, to the right, front and back, right? It's going to be different. It's interesting to ponder, to think through this emotion that stirs up at times, being grateful. Some of us are better at this than others. Some are just thankful for everything. Others -- it takes a mountain to move for them to show any kind of gratitude.

But generally speaking, gratitude would be a feeling of appreciation towards another because of something that they've done for us. We feel gratitude when someone is generous towards us, in whatever capacity. It could be time they give us. It could be money they give us, material things. It could be energy, just thoughtfulness. All of these things can play into us being thankful, but it is pretty subjective.

Christmas is coming. It's around the corner. Many of us are going to sit around Christmas trees or family gatherings and we are going to open up gifts. If you're a kid, Xbox = thankful. Xbox = grateful. Socks = socks. Socks = nothing. Maybe that's not just for the kids in here. Maybe if you're in your thirties that might be appreciated too. Xbox good/socks bad.

So much of this depends on who you are as a person. It depends on your stage of life. It depends on other factors, maybe even like what country you live in. It's pretty amazing. I found this one study that evaluated Americans' gratefulness. Listen to this: One out of every ten Americans experience regular feelings of gratitude. One out of ten experience regular feelings of gratitude! I thought that was pretty astounding. If you think about just this sample size in here – we have three or four hundred people maybe throughout the church today – one out of ten.

Then (this was really interesting) only 20% of adults view gratitude as a constructive and useful emotion. 20% of American adults view gratitude as a constructive and useful emotion! That means even talking about this right now, I bring up the word "gratitude," "grateful," whatever synonym you want to use, and only 20% of you are like, "Yeah, I think this is a useful time for us." The other 80% are like, "Why are we even talking about this?" Obviously, this is a skewed sample size. We

are more on the same page than most others. But that's just amazing! Even talking about this subject is going against the grain of our collective perspective.

Generally speaking, we are ungrateful people. We need a fundamental change within us to even see this as important, especially if we want this virtue to be prominent in our lives. We need a renewed life. This is why God's word is so important to us. It tells us what is important, and it tells us that *this* is important, so we don't care if 80% of adults think that this is a foolish exercise. We learn from the bible, not just here but over and over and over again, that we need to be a people -- that the human race needs to be marked by grateful worship.

So what are we grateful for? This is important. I can say that it's really important for us to be grateful, but we need to understand what we are grateful for. In our passage right here, in verse 12, what does he start off with? He says, "Put on then..." That word "then" is crucial, because it indicates something has come before that has kind of led him to this conclusion. He says, "Put on then..." Something has been said that gives context to what he is about to say. So, I just want you to pull back a little bit in your bibles, or scroll to verses 1 through 11, because I want to show you what he has just talked about that gives us insight into where we are today.

In Colossians 3, verse 1, he says:

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

*Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.*

## Special Messages – The Path To Grateful

Colossians 3:12-17 | Sunday, November 20, 2016 | By Adam Greenfield



Verses 1 through 11 set the stage, give us wonderful context of why in verse 12 he says, “Put on then...” Look at the things that he says in verses 1 through 11! He says to put them all away, all of those things that he had written here. All of those former characteristics -- he says to put them away. He says to put off the old self, put on the new, which is being renewed. He talks about there being no racial divide, that there is neither Greek nor Jew, Scythian, barbarian, slave. “Christ is all, and in all.”

So we have all of that -- basically he is saying Jesus has saved you. You used to be an absolute disaster, completely hopeless, living in this evil way of life, but now you are chosen ones. Listen, that list in verses 1 through 11 -- does that inspire choosing? Does that inspire anyone to be chosen who lived like that or who was marked by those characteristics? He says you are a chosen one. Jesus pulled you from that, chose you and gave you a new life. He has done it.

So he says to put off the old: anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, evil desire, idolatry – all of those things – he says to put off those. Then we get to verse 12 where he says, “Put on then.” He is using the image of getting dressed to help us understand. We all can understand the idea of taking off old, nasty, rugged, dirty, holey clothing and putting on soft, downy fresh, sweet-smelling, comfortable, beautiful new clothing.

Look, Christ has given you a new wardrobe, and Paul is saying: “Put it on.” For all the evil things that we used to be, all the nasty clothes we used to wear, and not just wear but *love* to wear, God has given beautiful, new, life-giving clothes. Look at the list. Look at the new clothes. This is renewed life. Where there was anger, wrath, malice, and bitterness, now we see compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience. That is the renewed life, and it should burn deep in us a profound gratefulness to God for what he has done.

But there is something else going on here. What are these attributes used for? Because there is a lot more going on here than just a new set of clothing, right? This new list of clothes for the new life -- do you know what it is? Do you know what it’s used for? It’s not so that you can walk around just looking beautiful and smelling good so the world can see how wonderful you are. “Wow, I’m a king’s kid now. Look at how I dress!” This list, the new clothes are used for others. It’s a focus on the needs of others. **The path to grateful is firmly built on the foundation of caring for other people.**

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Compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience – they all require eyes off of ourselves and on to others. That phrase “compassionate hearts” is the first thing. It’s the first piece of the new clothing. I’m not going to parse out each of these characteristics, but I just want you to see this first one in a unique way. The first thing we are to put on -- compassionate hearts – NT Wright says this it’s an understanding sympathy with others that affects one’s innermost being.

An understanding sympathy – generally speaking, again we are not good at this. We are not good at sympathizing with others. If we are good at it, we tend to only be good at sympathizing with others when we share a common perspective, right? Maybe you have a kid, I have a kid. Your kid gets sick. I am like, “Oh man, that stinks. I know how that feels. That’s really a bummer.” Or maybe you have a similar job or you are in a similar stage of life and you can sympathize because you experience that.

But that’s not what God calls us to do, to only sympathize with those who have the exact same experiences as we do. I remember being in my early twenties, newly married. I have an aunt who lives in the area who never had children. I’m probably the closest thing to a son to her, so we are very close, with a great relationship. But when I was in my twenties I was clueless about a lot of things. She always had a dog, and the dog died after 15 years with her. It was terrible, very sad, but it just didn’t connect with me. I knew in my heart, “Oh man, that stinks.” But I never called. I never said “I’m sorry that that happened.” I was so unsympathetic that I offended her greatly, and I heard about it.

Maybe another example would be our most recent election. Maybe you are seeing how people respond, one way or the other. It doesn’t matter which side of the coin you landed on, but maybe you are seeing things, how people respond on the news or on Facebook or in various conversations that you are having. Some people are affected one way or the other because of what happened, and you just cannot understand it because maybe you got your way or you didn’t get your way. You are seeing how other people are responding. Maybe some people are scared and some people are sad and some people have real impacting feelings about how this election took place. We saw how divided the country was – 50/50 basically, and yet the people who are on whichever side cannot seem to understand why the other side is either happy or sad.

I think it’s because we don’t try. Maybe we still in some ways like the old clothes. We like bitterness and anger and wrath. Or we don’t want to be compassionate. We don’t want to be

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mEEK, kind, patient. I think we are failing in a lot of ways by silly comments we make, by not taking time to sit and talk with someone and say, “Why are you feeling this way?” **It’s not a bad thing if you don’t understand. It’s a bad thing when you don’t understand and you don’t care that you don’t understand and you are just happy with your position. We need to put on the new clothes. We need to sit down with people who are different from us, who we can talk to and say, “What’s going on? I don’t understand, but I love you a lot. You are really impacted by this, so I want to know why. Help me understand.”**

And mean it. Don’t just do the right thing by saying you want to do that, because they will know the difference. If all you are doing is just going, “Mmm hmm, yeah, yeah,” and you are just waiting for them to get through it all, we are going to get to that when we talk about love in a little bit. Putting yourself in someone else’s shoes can be hard, but we have to do the hard work of trying. Just the connection between this and gratefulness – if we truly are thankful in our hearts to what God has done for us, for this renewed life, and we want to walk in this renewed life, then we are going to be thankful. Then we are going to seek to *eagerly* build relationship with other people and care for them in special, unique ways.

If we don’t, we will never be able to have meaningful relationships with people who are different. You will only be surrounded by people just like you who have similar experiences, similar bank accounts, similar skin color, similar age. But when we realize what Christ has done for us, that he gave his life for a people *vastly* different from himself...

**Remember we were chosen *while* angry, wrathful, bitter, idolatrous, evil -- so different from God. Yet, he comes and he condescends. It says that he sympathizes with our weakness and he is there to help and to save us. He did that – a God who has no weakness identified himself with the weak. When we understand that, it will fill us with gratitude and help us put on compassionate hearts and help us to put on kindness and humility and meekness and patience. It will pull us out of self-focus and push us towards focusing on the Lord and the needs of others.** And it’s good. It’s a good thing. It really leads us to verse 13, which is the second point.

### II. **It’s not just a renewed life, but a reformed justice, verse 13.**

Thinking this way, understanding this forces us toward a reformed view of justice. What do I mean by this? There is no talk of justice, necessarily, explicitly in here. So what am I talking about? Let me try to explain. We have just been told to put on these self-denying attributes. They are all self-

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denying. They are not meant to puff us up. **They are meant to shrink us so that God would be magnified and others would be preferred. That's Christian life.** Write that down. Memorize that. Understand that the Christian life is about loving the Lord and loving others, not self-love.

We are given these self-denying attributes and immediately we are given the application on how to use them. Here are new clothes. Put them on. Here's how you use them. Put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and use them with your dealings with other people -- specifically, difficult people, people who hurt you.

How do we do that? Well, it's by bearing and forgiving. He says, "bearing with one another...forgiving each other." This is key on the path to grateful because it's easy to be grateful when there's no conflict, when there's no thorn, as Stefan was praying this morning. But this application of the new life in Christ shows us and should be no surprise to us, that once we engage with other people it's hard. It gets sticky. You only "bear" with someone who is a pain in the you-know-what. It wouldn't be bearing otherwise. It would just be not-bearing. It would just be normal life.

Bearing means that you are shouldering, you are putting up with something unpleasant. It's another word for endurance. Endurance is never pleasant. If you want to be an endurance athlete, if you are going to run a long time or do anything for a long period of time, it is no fun. It's painful. It's long. It's boring. That's "bearing."

One of the most fundamental truths in this life is that people and relationships are tough. They take work. They take bearing. And I don't want to confuse bearing with tolerating. I think there is an important difference. We don't just tolerate other people in a condescending way, like, "Oh yeah, you're not so bad." Bearing is, again, if you combine it with talking about the new clothes, when we bear we are not just tolerating. We are *loving* that person. We are actively seeking to engage in relationship.

And if bearing wasn't hard enough, then he goes one step further and says there is forgiving. **You bear with one another and you forgive each other. One of the hardest things that we are told to do in the scriptures is to forgive, but it is one of those things that we are consistently commanded to do over and over again.** It's always spoken of in such definitive and simple language.

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Look at what he says. He says: “If one has a complaint against another...” It’s very simple. If someone has a complaint against another – what? Does he say, “Figure out who’s at fault, then that person should apologize and you can settle it”? He doesn’t. Never is forgiveness spoken of in trying to help identify who is at fault. What does he say? He says, “Forgive each other.” If someone has a complaint, forgive.

Another word that means “forgive” in this context is “to cancel.” You are canceling the wrong being done. So hopefully you are starting to see how justice plays into all of this, because what is justice? Justice is our idea of fair play. It’s making someone pay for their mistakes. If you crash into my car, you are going to give me money so it can be fixed. It’s your fault. It’s only fair. Our typical view of justice is: “It’s your fault, time to pay.” We work hard to make other people bear the penalty of their crime.

But here it’s different. The Christian life is different. It’s always different in the Christian life. I’m not saying that there is no sense where people should not pay for their crimes. It’s not about that. Let’s not even worry about that and just focus on how it impacts us on a day-to-day basis, because you will constantly want to justify why the other person should pay for what they’ve done to you. The Christian life says, “No, no, no, no. That’s not what this is about. It’s different.” **The Christian puts on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and in turn chooses to bear and to forgive, and by doing that flips justice all upside down, because the Christian says, “I’m *not* going to make you pay. Instead, I am going to absorb the pain that you caused me.”**

Maybe you are like, “Wow, that’s just nuts. You don’t know. You don’t know what she did. You don’t know what he did.” I’m going to tell you, Paul anticipates all of our objections. We are all a little bit like, “Yeah, but...” That’s what we want to say. “Yeah, I get that. That’s really nice, but what about \_\_\_\_\_.” Again, Paul anticipates it and adds this really sobering thought. He says, “Forgiving each other...” then there’s this next little clause. “Oh, in case you think I’m being a little crazy here, let me just tell you, as the Lord has forgiven you, so forgive other people.”

Sometimes we call that a Jesus Juke. It’s funny. Do you ever do something and someone goes, “Well, what would Jesus do in that case?” It’s not always the fair thing to do. But when Paul says it, it’s fair and it’s right. He says to forgive each other, and before you go on to tell me all your objections, remember what God has done for you. Let that settle in, then you can decide how to forgive one another.

You see, now we are forced to reconcile a few things. How has the Lord forgiven me? We could go to a lot of places in the scriptures to see how God has impacted our lives in his mercy and kindness, but we already saw a pretty dark description of who we were before Christ intervened. Sexual immorality, impurity, evil desire, idolatry, anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk – those in and of themselves would be enough for God to justifiably pour out his wrath on us. If you are like, “Well, I was never that bad,” you don’t understand the depth of our sin, because we are all in there. And while we were like that, Jesus died for us.

So what does justice say? Justice says that we should have paid the high penalty for those crimes against God, and God would have been just to pour out his wrath on us. But what does he do? He sends Jesus. He sends himself, his Son. And what does Jesus do? He absorbs the punishment. Justice demands that someone pay, and God, who is so merciful and loving and kind and just says, “Yes, someone has to pay. I’m declaring you do not have to pay, but instead my son will absorb the punishment for you.”

**We tend to struggle with forgiveness and with gratitude because we either don’t know or forget how much God has done for us.** That’s why you come here on Sunday morning, so we can constantly be reminded how good God is, how gracious he is. There is no good news without bad news. The bad news starts with “We were a mess,” and the good news comes in and says, “But God has saved us.” And that should birth a *fire* of gratitude in us. The debt that we owed God was enormous and Jesus paid it all with his life. So we say, “Thank you, God. Thank you for forgiving me. I was such a mess. What this person did to me is nothing compared to what I did to you, so I’m going to forgive him. I’m going to forgive her.”

Understanding what God did for us will stop our constant pursuit of justice, this kind of vengeance justice where “You did this to me, I am going to make you suffer and pay. I’m going to do that by either being passively aggressive, where I’m not going to talk to you anymore.” “What’s wrong?” “Nothing.” “No, no, no, something is really wrong.” “Nope. I’m fine.” “No, clearly something is wrong.” “I don’t know what you are talking about.” Or the other kind, which is terrible too, where we just explode all over people and try to get our due.

We will become most thankful in this life when we stop trying to make other people pay for their mistakes, when we stop self-justifying, self-vindicating, self-promoting, when vengeance becomes one of those things that have been put off. That’s because when we understand our own sin and

how unworthy we were of forgiveness, when someone offends me, I remember what God did, so I forgive.

Thomas Watson was a Puritan pastor/writer from the late 1600's, so super old, a long time ago. I know sometimes the language when I give quotes from something of that time period is a little different, but it's good for us to peer into another time. This is what he wrote. "If you wish to be thankful, get a heart deeply humbled with a sense of your own vileness. He who studies his sins wonders that he has anything, and that God should shine on such a dunghill." You don't get that word too often in sermons. "Pride stops the current of gratitude. Oh Christian, think of your own unworthiness. See yourself the least of saints and the chief of sinners and you will be thankful."

Do you know why he says that? Because Paul said that. Paul saw himself as the chief sinner. What? It's Paul! He wrote the New Testament! He's the man! And he says, "I am the chief of sinners, the least in the kingdom." It's unbelievable.

### III. A revolutionized love.

A revolutionized love is our third point. Paul tells us we need a revolutionized love. In verse 14 he says, "Above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." Paul closes this section by showing us the final piece of clothing, and it's the most important one. It is love. Hopefully you are seeing this. I don't need to spend too much time on this because love is one of those things that just penetrate through all of the Christian life. We talk about gratitude as kind of this basic Christian characteristic. **Well, love absolutely is the foundation upon which everything stands.** He says it here. It's the glue that perfectly holds everything together.

If we try to put on the new clothes to pursue these virtues without love at the center, it's not going to work. Why? I think it will help us to look at a different passage to give us a context. Because Paul, the same guy who wrote what we are reading today, also wrote 1 Corinthians. He wrote a letter to the church at Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 13 – a very, very famous passage, read at 90% of the weddings ever done – in the first three verses this is what Paul says:

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am*

*nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

This is an expanded version of what he just said in Colossians 3. It's a bigger picture. **Love is the foundation of any godly activity we engage in.** I mean, he talks about the smallest things. "If I give my life for a cause, but if love is not at the center..." he goes so far as to say it's nothing. It's worthless. We are like, "Man, that doesn't make any sense."

He goes on to tell us that love is the one thing that will go on forever, that it will exist in the next life with the Lord. But I think it's also so important, because it gets to the deepest part of us. We can engage in good activities. We can act like we care about other people or other things that are happening, but if love isn't the driving force it won't work. It will only go so far. It will take us up to a point and it will stop, because people will either realize that we are not being genuine, or eventually our true intentions will come out.

Look, it's not rocket science. If I go to my wife and give her flowers and chocolates and she says, "Oh, what's the occasion?" If I say, "I don't know. It's what I'm supposed to do, right?" She won't like it. It's not about the flowers. It's not about the chocolates. It's about my love. It's about my expression of love to her. So all of those things that we do for other people – if they're not coming from a genuine emotion of deep-felt care for them, then it might meet some needs at a basic level, but it will not go the full distance to have its perfect work.

**That's what God wants from us – that our hearts would be so full of love for him and so full of thanksgiving for all that he's done, that that love would spill over into the world around us.** We might say, "Well, what if I don't feel love for other people? You don't want me to fake it, right?" I would say that you are misunderstanding what love is. Love is a choice. In many, many ways it is a choice.

God chose to love us when we did not stir up feelings -- warm bubbly butterflies and roses. We were not that picture of the beautiful person just waiting to be loved on. No, we were in nasty, ragged, ugly clothes. God saw, and his love is so pure and amazing he said, "I choose you. I love you." Too often we aim our love for reasons that are not godly. **God says that true love is just that you lay down your life for others. You choose to do it. God chose to love us, not because of anything we brought to the table. We can choose to love others.**

So what do we do? It's one thing to say, "Look, just be thankful." I get it. It's not always going to work. We need to think, "How can we train ourselves to be thankful, to stir these things up in our lives?" I want to give you three quick points as we round this out.

### 1. **Constantly remind yourself of God's goodness.**

This is an active work that we must do. We have to remind ourselves of all that God has done. In the scriptures, especially in the psalms, recounting the good deeds of the Lord and thankfulness are paired so often. We remember. We remind. Why do we have to remind ourselves? Why do we have to be active in it? Because we are just so prone to forget. We sang the song earlier: "I am prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love." I am prone to forget all the good things that God has done for me because I am focused on the flat tire that's in front of me right now and I am angry about it and my life is miserable because my whole life is a flat tire. And it's always a flat tire. Every time I put air in the tire it just goes flat again. What's the point?

That's how we think and talk often when we forget the amazing things that God has done for us. So, it's good for us to write it down, to think about it, to remember. When things start looking bleak in our lives we can say, "Oh yeah, right, but God saved me. Always, first: He has saved me. He has changed me. He has given me this and this. And look at what he has done here and how he has done this and this. When you start doing that and start remembering that, it starts to bubble up – the thankfulness, the good things inside, and it pushes aside the junk that we don't need to remember, but we remember what is good and godly. And not only do we remember them, we tell of them. We tell others. "Hey, look at what God has done in my life."

### 2. **The second thing is to be noticeably grateful.**

You want to constantly remind yourself of God's goodness. The second thing is be noticeably grateful. Look, in word and deed don't just be thankful in a shell, in your home, in a corner. Do that, but also be noticeable in your thankfulness. When we are here, be visibly thankful for what God has done. When we are singing songs about God's truth, man there is a time when you can just go: "Yes!" And smile! Be a picture of God's grace to the world around. People are watching. There is a desperate world watching and looking at Christians. We can seem all over the place. Let's be known for our love and for our gratitude for God. Jesus said that we let our light shine so the world can see our good works. Be grateful for the spiritual blessings in your life, more than the temporal blessings. If you do that, I promise you, you will be visibly and noticeably grateful.

### 3. Finally, be an agent of gratitude.

Spur others on to gratitude. Be an agent that makes others thankful. That might mean you doing good things for other people, so they are like, “Wow, look how generous! How great God is through this person!” And they start thanking God because of you, but also just your example. “Man, look at him! He’s always so thankful! I probably should be more thankful, because I think I need that.” If you put on what Paul tells you to put on, you will absolutely cause others to be grateful. Be generous. Be happy. Be an agent of gratitude to the world around you.