

3Gs & Thanksgiving

Text: Hebrews 12.28; 2 Corinthians 4.15; Colossians 2.6–7

Theme: Recognizing our guilt that is dealt with by God's grace leads us to great gratitude in Christian living

Introduction — I remember all the hype when our smart phones went to 3G

- I didn't know what it meant, but there it was: 3G!
- that didn't last long before they started to announce that 4G was the new standard
- again, no idea, but it was supposed to be the best
- and yet, here we are now using 5G on our phones
- speculation when we'll have 6G is running rampant, at least according to Google

Well, I'm not going to preach about smart phones, speed or access with them

- I want to direct our attention to the season in which we find ourselves: thanksgiving
- next Sunday is our annual Ingathering Service
- you will be “preaching” the sermon that day through your testimonies of thanksgiving
- in order to help “prime the pump” I want us to consider why we must be thankful
- so, to help with that I want to present our own 3G network of thanksgiving
- Guilt, Grace, and Gratitude are the 3Gs we'll consider this morning
- these three have been used for centuries to keep our focus upon the gospel of Jesus
- recognizing our guilt that is dealt with by God's grace leads us to great gratitude in Christian living

Let's think first on our...

I. GUILT

- this first “G” is at core of our humanity since Adam & Eve sinned in the Garden
- we are guilty, every single one of us
- it is not a popular idea in so many churches today
- Ligonier's State of Theology survey I mentioned last week proves the sad reality of this
- here is one of the statements: Everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God
- a whopping 61% of evangelical church-goers agreed with this statement!

1. Therapeutic Moral Deism

- these three words describe our age and our culture, even within the church in the USA
- we're not guilty, we under duress from the stresses of life
- we're all depressed to some degree
- we're just emotionally frazzled due to other external circumstances surrounding us
- if we can just live a decently moral life, with some solid virtues to guide us, we'll be okay
- after all, God is all about love, His love is unconditional no matter what we do
- when I hear and read these things I am heartbroken for the church & God's truth
- all that I just mentioned are mere symptoms of our key issue: we are guilty
- **Romans 3:23 “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”**

2. Scripture is clear on this

- we have inherited Adam's sin nature...by virtue of being born
- yes, babies are cute, adorable, and to be loved
- but every one is born with this inherent sin nature, making us guilty
- we don't even have to commit a sin yet
- but when this sin nature kicks in...and it does indeed kick in soon...we sin

- this is what separates us from God and Christ and the redemption found in Him alone
- God is an impartial and entirely just Judge who will judge the world in equity
- when Christ comes again and we all stand before Him, no more holding back
- against those still dead in their trespasses and sins, His wrath will be poured out
- **Matthew 12:36 “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak...”**
- **Matthew 5:22 “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.”**

3. Peter's greatest sermon

- in Acts 2, Apostle Peter preaches his great sermon on Day of Pentecost
- his audience that day were largely filled with those who had cried out for death of Jesus
- these Jews had been given their Messiah and they killed Him
- Pontius Pilate knew he was innocent, but still they cried, “Crucify Him!”
- they'd rather have a thug, murderer, and insurrectionist named Barrabas than Messiah Jesus
- Peter's message reminded them of this fact and they were overcome with guilt
- great conviction hit them hard, so hard they cried out in response
- **Acts 2:37 “Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”**

4. A quick fix?

- in many of today's churches, there would be a quick solution provided to this question
- “you meant well” “your good still outweighs the bad” “you were pressured into this”
- Peter knew none of this; a holy God cannot simply overlook sin and still be just
- it matters not our severest hand-wringing or imagined good intentions
- so much ill flows from our sinful hearts
- **Matthew 15:18 “But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.”**
- we're too like Genesis 6.5 — “only evil continually”
- **Jeremiah 17:9 “[Our] heart[s] [are] deceitful above all things, and desperately sick...”**
- according to both Old & New Testaments, there is none righteous before God
- and this is not just those Jews on Day of Pentecost
- it is each of us before Christ, apart from God

Which brings us to our second “G”

II. GRACE

- Peter's response to the crowd that day was...
- **Acts 2:38-39 “And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”**
- when Holy Spirit begins to do the work of re-birthing our sinful heart, conviction occurs
- God's mirror of the Law shows us who we are, and we cry out in our need
- **“What shall we do?”**
- facing a holy God, ours should be the voice of others
- **“Behold, we perish, we are undone, we are all undone!” (Numbers 17.12)**
- **“Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7.24)**

1. Not by our own attempts

- Peter was preaching in Jerusalem
- he could have pointed the mass of convicted humanity to the great Temple
- go, offer sacrifices, take animals to the priests
- but this was just a shadow of that which had come and provided for them
- Peter knew well the reality of Jesus, His perfect obedience and work on the cross

2. There is no other name

- they must look to Jesus alone
- **Acts 10:43 “To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”**
- **Acts 13:38 “Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you...”**
- God's unmerited favor is shown in and through Jesus Christ
- indeed, it is unmerited: we do nothing to earn this grace of God in Christ Jesus
- it is a free gift
- but there is more to this grace

3. Enemies no more

- all of our attempts to earn God's favor are nothing but “filthy rags”(Isaiah 64.6)
- because of this, we are enemies of God; we, like those early Jews, are murders, haters, more
- grace refers not simply to the gift, but to the truth of reconciliation
- in Christ, we are no longer enemies, but His grace removes that evil title
- **Romans 4:15 “For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.”**
- **Romans 4:16 “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace...”**

4. Our great Substitute

- this grace comes through One who took everything against us in our place
- **1 Timothy 2:5 “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...”**
- **Hebrews 9:15 “Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.”**
- **1 Peter 3:18 “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,”**
- what a glorious exchange, all by God's gracious favor shown to us in Christ
- while the righteous demands of the Law are met in Christ...
- while God does all the work of saving us, making us His adopted sons...
- while forgiveness of sin and removal of guilt & wrath come...
- ...there is more that we are saved for

And this brings us to our final “G” word...

III. GRATITUDE

- gratitude indicates our motive now for obeying God's good laws
- it is our reason for doing good works, expressed in word and deed

1. Biblical gratitude

- Hebrews 12:28 “Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe...”
- 2 Corinthians 4:15 “For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.”
- Colossians 2:6-7 “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”
- gratitude is another word for thanksgiving, as you heard in these passages
- we could spend remainder of morning just reading from the Psalms about giving thanks
- but just a few for now:
 - Psalm 30:4 “Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.”
 - Psalm 75:1 “We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for your name is near. We recount your wondrous deeds.”
 - Psalm 97:12 “Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!”
- note carefully there, it is the righteous, those declared righteous because of Christ, who do this
- coming to the Lord’s Table is a giving of thanks
- this is so because the NT word for thanks is *eucharista*, which is another word for this observance
- God shows us our guilt, He saves us by His grace, and He fills our hearts with thanksgiving

So, what does this look like?

IV. LIVING OUT OUR GRATITUDE

- allow me to get very practical now
- let me give you several “hands on” ways to express your gratitude to God
- then, Lord willing, next Lord’s Day, you can come and give vent to all that is in your heart
- as you hear these suggestions, think of a man in love with a woman, husband/wife
- he wants to shower her with love and gifts because he loves her so much
- this is what we do in our faithful obedience to God: show Him our love through thanksgiving
- so here we go:

1. Use your bulletin to jot notes, reminding yourself of who to thank

- Kelly for putting it all together
- musicians & singers for leading us
- ushers for greeting you & giving you that bulletin
- the greeters who met you coming in

2. Thank those who help decorate our sanctuary, this season and that of Advent to come

- don’t know who these are? Talk to Kelly; she can tell you

3. Find your deacons and thank them for their spiritual leadership over you

4. Thank the trustees—Jay Nelson, David Donley, Grant Wilson

- they keep this building up, well-maintained, and together

5. While you’re at that, thank Heather Jenks & family for keeping it so clean all the time

6. **Get a list from Kelly of the Women's Serving groups**
 - every meal here is somehow loving provided, prepared, and presented by them
7. **As you leave today, as you arrive next week, be on the lookout**
 - find someone to thank, for being a part, for serving, for something that comes to mind
8. **When Scripture is read, thank God for preserving it for us**
 - I could go on, simply trying to help you cultivate a thankful heart to God
 - there is a list in your bulletin today to help give seeds of gratitude to express next week
 - so, come ready to share, to rejoice, to be encouraged, and to give thanks

Conclusion – We serve, obey, and worship out of gratitude

- this is not a debt to repay
- this is a joyous duty and privilege
- let's make sure, especially at this time of year, to overflow with gratitude
- **2 Corinthians 9:15 “Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!”**
- His gift is life, new life in Christ, life propelled by His Spirit
- gratitude is ours because of the gospel
- **2 Corinthians 4:6 “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”**