

A Thankful Heart

Col. 3:15-17

INTRODUCTION:

All Stand and Read Scripture

Colossians 3:15-17 (NASB)

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Prayer

ILLUSTRATION:

Seven things to be thankful for: (Names and descriptions of actual events may have been changed to protect the guilty!) Be grateful...

- for **husbands** who attack small repair jobs around the house. They usually make them big enough to call in professionals and get the ENTIRE project done correctly.
- for **smoke alarms**. They let you know when the turkey is A BIT overdone.
- for **check engine lights**. They remind you that after 12,000 miles, it MIGHT be time for a new oil change.
- For **breaker switches** which provide a BRIEF SUGGESTION that you PROBABLY should change the light switch AFTER you turn off the power instead of during the installation of the switch.
- For **mom**s that call to wish you happy anniversary which REMINDS you that it IS your anniversary and you still need to somehow get a card and flowers for your wife.
- for **very hot fires** that firmly teach you NOT to put water on a grease fire and then try to carry the pan outside resulting in a burn ring on the hardwood floor.
- for **wives with electric knives** that find the melted plastic bag in the cavity of the roasted turkey that the husband failed to remove PREVENTING the family from discovering his mistake.

The verses that we are going to examine this morning talk about what it means to have a thankful heart.

They tell us

- where a thankful heart comes from,
- what it can accomplish in us personally,
- and what it can accomplish for the kingdom of God.

As we deal with these verses, ask yourself, "Am I controlled by a thankful heart?"

BODY:

I. The Peace of Christ Yields a Thankful Heart.

Colossians 3:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

The phrase “Peace of Christ” only appears once in the Bible.

Peace refers to a feeling. It is the opposite of feeling worry or frustration or despair or boredom.

It’s how we feel when everything is good — when our circumstances are bringing us full and lasting joy and pleasure.

But this peace does not depend on circumstances.

Which is why Paul calls it —

The peace OF CHRIST

The peace of Christ is a feeling of peace that is given to us by Christ when we trust — not our circumstances — but all that God **promises** to us when we are in Christ.

God has promised that through Christ, we have been forgiven of our sins, and that we are now found righteous before Him.

God has promised that our obedience to Him will be rewarded with love.

John 14:21 (NASB)

²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”

God has promised that He will orchestrate every event in your life, including trials, to bring you even more peace in Him.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NASB)

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

These are but a few of the many promises of God which can bring us peace because we know that these are **eternal** truths. So regardless of the circumstances here on earth, we have peace in our lives because we can rest on His eternal promises.

“Rule” – the word which is used here for rule is **not** the kind of word that would speak of a **king or an elected official**. The idea is more of a **judge or an umpire**. Both a judge and

an umpire take the information that is available to them, and based on that information, they make a call as to what course of action is going to be followed. One or all parties may not like what the judge has to say, but they have obligated themselves to do whatever the judge says. He is in control.

There are many **umpires** that a person can allow to control their hearts other than peace.

MONEY: A person who loves money lets money control their thoughts and actions. Who gets hurt and what is right is not important. Money, and the getting of more of it, is the rule. Whatever it takes to get more of it, that's what they are willing to do.

PLEASURE: Some persons allow pleasure to control them. Whatever it takes to get more pleasure – sexual pleasure, football pleasure, TV pleasure, food pleasure – I'm going after it no matter if I have to put myself in debt to get it, no matter if I break God's laws to achieve it, no matter how big the consequences are going to be, no matter if I hurt my wife and kids.

CONTROL. Others allow the desire for control to control them. My way or the highway. My way or no way. Even if you convinced me that your way is the best way, I won't go that way because then I would no longer be in control.

PEACE. None of these things that I have listed nor any other thing is supposed to control the decision making process in my mind. It is the peace of Christ that is supposed to control me.

So when my **bills** pile up, it is not my **bills** that control my actions or my attitude; it is Christ's peace.

When my **health** goes bad, it is not my **body** that controls my spirit or my relationship to other people; it is Christ's peace.

When I have a **disagreement** with someone, it is not my **emotions** that control my thoughts or my actions; it is **Christ's peace**. Christ's peace decides how I'm going to respond to the events and people of my life.

When the peace of Christ is the umpire in our church – when bringing people to peace with God through salvation and forgiveness and achieving peace with one another – is the guide that determines the decisions that we make and the pathways that we follow, then we can work together in spite of our differences.

Then Paul says, “. . . **and be thankful** . . .”. It almost sounds like a thought that Paul just threw in for good measure. It didn't really fit anywhere else, but it was important enough to include somewhere, so he just decided to stick it here. “**Let the peace of Christ rule** and oh yeah, **be thankful**.” Paul was very intentional when he tied peace and thankfulness together. When I am thankful for my world, then I can be at peace with my world. When I am thankful for my brothers in Christ, then I can be at peace with them. And when I remember what God has done by bringing me into relationship with Himself through Jesus and am thankful for that, then I can let the peace of Christ control every thought, every action, every word. The more thanks, the more peace. The less thanks, the less peace. The two are in direct proportion to one another. You want peace? Try being thankful.

II. Christ's Word Yields a Thankful Heart.

Colossians 3:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

“Word of Christ” What is the Word of Christ?

It is the Bible. The Word of Christ is our manual of who Christ is and how we are to live for Him. It describes His character and everything about Him that we need to know.

- what He did while on the earth
- how He reacted to people
- the sacrificial life that He lived
- the death that He died for us.

The words that He spoke to His disciples.

The thoughts and ideas and ways of Almighty God.

The perspective that He has on this world.

The way that He sees people.

It is the Word which is Christ. Remember, John 1:1 says, “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**” The Word is Jesus Himself.

“**Dwell**” – It is that Word which Paul says is supposed to dwell in me. From time to time, I have had persons come to my house and spend some time there. They have stayed overnight or even for a few nights. All of these persons were guests. There is a **difference** between a **guest and someone who dwells** in a home. A guest is not a permanent resident. A dweller is. A guest comes and goes according to what is convenient for him and for his host. A dweller remains regardless of the circumstances. A guest would not have the right to decide that he was going to paint the walls in my living room purple with pink pokadots. A dweller has that right. I am a dweller in my home; I have the right to paint my living room purple with pink pokadots. I have the right to make changes. Unlike my body, I am dwelling in my **earthly house** with a June. She would not doubt want to have a say in the painting as well!

“**Richly**” – Paul says that this word is supposed to dwell in me **richly**. Whatever you are rich in will make most of the decisions in your life. If you are rich in **love**, love will make your decisions. If you are rich in **mercy**, mercy will color every relationship that you have. If you are rich in **wisdom**, the decisions that you make will be governed by that wisdom. Paul says that we are supposed to be rich in the **dwelling of God’s Word** in us.

Christ’s Word dwelling richly within me is supposed to do all those things. He’s supposed to have the right to change whatever about my life that God doesn’t like. He wants the walls of my mind painted purple with pink pokadots? Go for it! When we allow Christ’s Word, Christ Himself, to have control over our thoughts and actions, there will be a result.

“**teaching and admonishing with all wisdom**”

Teaching. That’s communicating information about what I am supposed to believe and know.

Admonishing. That's warning people about the beliefs they hold right now and the direction that they are headed in. Both of those are my responsibility as a minister. But Paul wasn't writing to a minister here. He was writing to the church as a whole. Each of us have a responsibility to teach other persons including our children, fellow Christians, anyone we come in contact with. And we have a responsibility to warn. That's not always easy. But it is necessary.

1 Peter 3:15-16 (NASB)

¹⁵ but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; ¹⁶ and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

"Singing" – There is another result when the word is overflowing in your life. You will sing. It's a song that flows out of gratitude in your heart toward God. My attitude at all times is to be one of thanks regardless of what the circumstances may be. And it's not just an attitude that I have way down in my heart. I'm supposed to vocalize those thanks.

If the word of Christ is going to richly dwell in you, you're going to have to get it down off of the shelf. You're going to have to do more than just read a verse or two a day just so that you can say you fulfilled your duty. You're going to have to study it. You're going to have to start memorizing it.

III. Constantly Glorifying God Yields a Thankful Heart.

Colossians 3:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

"Whatever you do" - that means everything including your job, your parenting, your shopping, your paying of bills, your driving on the road, your visiting with the next door neighbor –

"do all" – that means every part of everything that you do even those boring parts or those things that you do because no one else will do them or those things that really don't seem to matter too much –

"in the name of the Lord Jesus" – knowing that what you do and how you do it will color what people think of Jesus, will at least partially determine whether they want Jesus in their life or not, and will determine whether you were a faithful servant or not.

When we do all **in the name of the Lord Jesus**, people will see Christ in us. We will become a light to the world.

"giving thanks". There's that thanks word again.

We need only to look outward from ourselves to see others who have greater needs than we do. Then, our troubles seem small, and our sorrows seem few. Our weeping turns to joy as we give thanks, and, instead of complaining, we want to extend a helping hand to others. We want them to be blessed, also. Thanksgiving looks outward with a helping hand to the needs of others in an effort to bring as many as possible into the blessings of God.

We are thankful not only for what has happened and what we have acquired on the outside, but also the changes that have occurred in your character on the inside.

On Christmas morning, when I was a kid, I would rip into presents and find all kinds of neat stuff. But the problem with that was that I usually neglected to read the tag that told who the gift was from. I got so wrapped up in the gift that I forgot about the giver. True thankfulness looks beyond the gift to see the giver. The greatest gift is not what God does for us. The greatest gift is God Himself. Let us be THANKFUL through Christ to God.

CONCLUSION:

ILLUSTRATION:

The story is told of one of the wagon train parties on the Oregon Trail. Water and grass had been scarce for several days. Some of the wagons were broken down causing many delays in the stifling heat. A general feeling of **discouragement and despair** had **overcome** the **early optimism and cheer**. So it was decided that, at the next night's stop, a meeting would be held to air out their troubles. When the immigrants had gathered around the campfire, one of them arose and said, "Before we continue, I think we should first **thank God** that we have come this far

- with no loss of life,
- with no serious trouble with the Indians,
- and that we have enough strength left to finish our journey."

This was done, and **then** there was silence. No one had any complaints to make. When they had reflected on the journey in such a light of thankfulness, it seemed they really were fortunate. This is the transformation the thankful heart can often make. It enables us to see the real blessings that occur in our lives despite the hardships that had to be overcome to receive them.

May I encourage you in your walk with Christ? This week, whatever happens in your life, find something in that situation for which you can give thanks. You may have to look pretty hard, but look for something. It may be very small, but find something to be thankful for each and every day. And try to find something different each day. Then, once you've found that thing to be thankful for, express your thanks to the person or persons who are responsible for that item of thanks. Then, your attitude of gratitude will not only affect you and your outlook on life, but it will also affect the people around you.

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, do it today. Don't wait until you have cleaned up your life. **You don't clean yourself up to come to the Christ; you surrender yourself to Christ, to let Him clean you up!**

He Is Lord!

He is Lord, He is Lord. He has risen from the dead and He is Lord.
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess, That Jesus Christ is Lord.