

ESSENTIAL TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL

The Foundations of Our Faith

Discussion Guide
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Sermon Title

Be Thankful

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Colossians 3: 14-17

Introduction: In Colossians 3 Paul gives us a description of practical living in the power of the Holy Spirit. As those who have been raised up with Christ, and whose minds are set upon things above, there are certain behaviors which fall away and others which become attitudes characteristic of followers of Christ. Among them is an attitude and a lifestyle of gratitude, expressed in spirit and in witness. Paul writes, “and be thankful!” It is a direct command and a choice we make as Christ’s followers.

Sermon Outline

I. Thankfulness is a Major Theme of the Bible

- A. The word *thank* and its various forms (7 in all) occurs 169 times in 162 different verses of the NASB. In 33 of those verses we are directly commanded to give thanks.
- B. King David, the psalmist, wrote most prolifically about being thankful. He was so concerned that the nation express gratitude to God that he appointed certain Levites to the specific job of starting every day by thanking God for His many blessings.
- C. A major portion of Jewish heritage and family worship consists of the giving of thanks. It is part of every meal and frequent throughout the Passover celebration.
- D. The word *thank* occurs over 50 times in the New Testament, 11 of which are specific commands for followers of Christ to be thankful and to give thanks.
- E. Jesus Himself is recorded as giving thanks 9 different times in the Gospels, 8 times for food He (they) were about to eat, and once for the fact that His Father always heard Him when He prayed.

II. Thankfulness is Both an Attitude and an Action

- A. A grateful heart grows from an awareness of the goodness and lovingkindness of God (which Jeremiah says is *new every morning [Lam. 3:22-24]*). Gratitude of spirit springs from the awareness that every good and perfect gift comes from God and is most profoundly realized in the things we frequently take for granted.
- B. A grateful heart gives rise to frequent expressions of thanksgiving shared with others. It is an offering of the “sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.” (Heb. 13:15) Four times David says, “I will give thanks to the Lord *with all my heart.*” (Ps. 9:1; 86:12; 111:1, 138:1). The Scripture models for us faithful thanksgiving for every meal and frequent testimonies of thanksgiving among God’s people.

III. Thankfulness is a Choice Thoughtfully and Deliberately Made

- A. We are commanded to be thankful (Col. 3:15) It is not an option, nor is it based on any particular life circumstances. It is a deliberate choice we must make to find the blessings and to give God thanks and praise for them.
- B. We are even commanded to give thanks in every situation and for everything. (Eph. 5:20; I Thess 5:18; I Tim 2:1) We are instructed to season our praying liberally with thanksgiving. (Eph. 5:20; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; I Tim. 2:1; Heb. 13:15)
- C. Everyone’s life is a mixed bag of blessings and trials, good things and bad, pleasure and pain. There are also seasons of life that lean more one direction than the other. We are encouraged to be purposely mindful of the ways God blesses us every day, to remember the simple necessities, to look for the good, to trust a heavenly Father who only plans the best for us, to deliberately see, in a glass filled to the middle, that it is half full without dwelling on the fact that it is also half empty—God knows our need.

Conclusion: A natural blessing of being grateful is the frequent mention of joy and peace in the context of thankfulness. Often, thanksgiving is mentioned in the context of singing. A grateful heart is a merry heart and brings the light and blessing of God not only to oneself, but to all those around.

Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 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.
Colossians 3: 14-17 (NASB)

Knowledge results in arrogance; the goal of our instruction is love.

Discussion Questions

1.) At this moment in your life, on a scale of 1 to 10 with one being totally self-absorbed in misery and ten being overflowing with gratitude, where are you?

2.) Look at a clock...in the next one minute write down everything in your life for which you are thankful right now.

3.) How has this sermon affected the way you think about gratitude? How has it impacted your life and what do you expect to see happen as a result of what you have heard?

4.) Express your understanding of being thankful **for** all things? Do you have a better understanding of the command to be thankful for all things?

5.) Do you have the habit of giving thanks for every meal? How do you express this (same “blessing” every time or spontaneous)? What about in public places?

6.) Take the next few lines and write a thank you note to God for this Thanksgiving time. Consider reading it for family and friends at the Thanksgiving meal.

7.) Go back to Q#2: What was the first thing you put down and why?

MEMORY VERSE

God’s Vision and Mission for the Alliance Bible Church

The Alliance Bible Church is a multi-cultural church celebrating the life of Christ in us by:

- Proclaiming the full message of God’s Good News to the diverse cultures of McHenry and surrounding communities,
- Discipling believers in living the deeper Christian life,
- Equipping His people for the work of ministry, and
- Demonstrating the unconditional love of Jesus to our community through meaningful acts of service.

