

Wil Owens

The Centrality of Thanksgiving in the Believer; Col 3:15-17

GPBC

11.22.20

Introduction – In the autumn of 1621 Pilgrims and Wampanoag gathered to share a feast to celebrate a successful harvest. There was much to be thankful for because so many of those first Pilgrims had perished from disease and starvation while trying to settle in a new land. The reason they sacrificed so much to make such a perilous journey across the ocean and the reason they endured so much hardship to settle in a new country was worship. Worship was the driving force for the Pilgrims. Eventually, thanksgiving became a national holiday.

The point of Thanksgiving Day in its historical root and the point of the word thanksgiving are the same, namely, there is a God who exists and He is good and He is worthy of worship.

That's why we find throughout the Bible and especially here in Colossians, the call and command for thanksgiving. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ, of all people, has abundant reason for giving thanks to God. You give thanks when you are the recipient of good. When someone gives you a gift, you tell them thank you. You express your thanks for their generosity, for their kindness to you.

How much more so have we as believers received the goodness and generosity and kindness of God. He has given us His Son that we might have eternal life. He has given us His Spirit that we might live to His glory in this life. He has given us His Word that we might know Him and know the truth and know the gospel and know the riches of His grace and promises. He has adopted us into His family that we might be joint heirs with Christ. He has reconciled us to Himself that we might have fellowship with Him. He has given us prayer that we might commune with Him. He has given us the Church that we might encourage and strengthen one another in the faith. He has given to us all that we need for life and salvation. Therefore, thanksgiving is central in the life of the people of faith.

Paul makes this abundantly clear in these 3 verses by including thankfulness in each one. Each verse culminates with some form of thanksgiving. Each verse begins with instruction for the Christian life and the evidence of living the

Christian life is thankfulness. In other words, the more we enjoy God, the greater will be our thankfulness.

- I. Thankfulness is in the Believer's DNA. (v15)
 - a. God has given us the peace of Christ – indeed we were called to the peace of Christ when we were called to Christ. Salvation in Christ comes with many graces, many gifts, many benefits – one of which is that we can have peace, godly peace, rest unknown by the world, peace that passes all understanding. Quiet of spirit and stillness of soul that transcends circumstances and feelings and disappointments and heartaches in this life.
 - b. But notice we're not passive in possessing this peace. It's here for us in Christ, but we have to let it rule in our hearts rather than distress and worry.
 - i. Our hearts belong to Christ but dark and dreadful and dismal thoughts are always battling to take back what belongs to God. We have to choose to replace thoughts of doubt and discouragement by pouring into our minds the things of God.
 - ii. 3:2 – Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.
 - iii. When we look to God and cling to His promises and rest in His sovereign care and perfect character, doubt and fear are driven away and the peace of Christ resides on the throne of our hearts. We can have rest in the most restless of situations, peace in the most disturbing of days, and solitude in the loudest of troubles.
 - c. God has given you something that the world does not have and cannot give – peace, true, lasting, eternal peace. Augustine said, "Our souls are restless until they find their rest in You."
 - d. Paul says that's what God has given you. Be thankful. Being thankful is the only response to being called.
 - i. To be thankful is not an action as much as it is an attitude. Giving thanks is something you do, being thankful is descriptive of who you are.
 - ii. Thankfulness is written right into the believer's DNA, it comes with the new heart. It's part of the new creation. God did not make us to be discontent and complaining and whining and

grumbling. God has made us to be thankful. When we realize our calling, we respond with thanksgiving.

- e. We live out thankfulness as we realize the peace of God.
 - f. When we are in the middle of life's most difficult moments, knowing we should be falling apart, but realizing the peace of God has settled over our hearts, that experience of peace produces within us a Godward thankfulness.
- II. The Word of God Generates Thankfulness in the Believer. (v16)
- a. How do we set our minds on things above? By saturating our minds and hearts with the Word of God. The second command is that the Word of Christ would dwell in us richly. The peace of Christ will rule in our hearts when the Word of God richly dwells in us.
 - b. The Word is going to teach us – when we are in the Word we're going to learn about God and life and sin and salvation and heaven and hope and promise and forgiveness and freedom and more! The more of the Word we pour in our lives, the greater our view of God and our enjoyment of Him!
 - c. The Word is going to admonish us – when we are in the Word, the Word gets in us, it corrects our worldly thinking, it convicts us of our sinful ways, it aligns our hearts with truth, it rebukes and reminds, it sharpens our spiritual discernment to know right from wrong, truth from lie.
 - d. The Word moves us to worship – the more we see the Lord in the Word, the more we desire to praise Him – singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
 - e. The Word extends from our life to one another.
 - f. When the Word richly dwells in our lives, the teaching, the admonishing, the praising, the one another living, it all comes with thankfulness in our hearts to God. Where God's Word richly dwells, so does thankfulness. If you have a hard time being thankful, but you quickly criticize and grumble, dive into the Word and let the Word of God take root in your life.
 - g. The Word of God turns our inward pity into Godward thankfulness.
 - h. Col 2:13-15
- III. Thankfulness Produces Thanksgiving (v17)

- a. V15 is a state of being – be thankful. V16 is an internal attitude of the heart – with thankfulness in your hearts to God. V17 then is outworking of what is internal. The state of the heart becomes the catalyst for the actions of life. Attitude becomes action. Thankfulness becomes giving thanks. Who we are on the inside expresses itself on the outside.
- b. Thanksgiving is driving and motivating our holy living so that every word and every deed is done in the name of the Lord Jesus!
 - i. If we're having trouble with our speech and our actions being tainted with self and sin rather than in the name of Jesus, we've probably forgotten to be thankful.
 - ii. When we stop and remember that if it were not for Christ, we wouldn't have heaven, and if it were not for God, we wouldn't have the next breath or the next step or the next meal, if we think more about all we do have in Christ rather than think about all we think we don't have in the world, all of a sudden those next words and those next deeds begin to sound and look very differently.
 - iii. Because they are flavored with thankfulness rather than corrupted with selfishness.
- c. Notice how this works in the believer, how thanksgiving is central to the believer in heart and in life.
 - i. We are recipients of God and all of His good gifts in Christ. Undeserving, unworthy recipients, yet through Christ, our Savior, God lavishes His grace, His gifts, on us.
 - ii. He has given us invaluable treasures through Christ like peace and His Word of life. The more He pours His kindness on us, the more we turn to Him in praise and thanksgiving.
 - iii. With thankfulness in your hearts TO God – giving thanks TO God the Father through Him.
 - iv. He gives us Himself, and we give Him thanks.
 - v. He gives us good gifts, and we give Him glory.
 - vi. He gives us salvation, and we give Him praise.
 - vii. He gives us Christ, and we give Him our lives.
 - viii. Ill. Petra – I have a thankful heart that you have given me and it can only come from you.

Conclusion – When Christ is the root, thanksgiving is the fruit!