

51-03-01.wpd—The Attitude of Gratitude
gratitude, thanksgiving, blessings, attitude
Col. 3:15-17

Each aspect of the Christian life is an arena of thanksgiving.

INTRODUCTION:

—[Medieval story about two angels, sent to get her up people's prayers in baskets, one to collect *petitions*" and one to collect *thanksgivings*. It wasn't long till the first one returned with a basket overflowing with *petitions*, but much later the other came back discouraged with very few thanksgivings at the bottom of his basket.] It's an interesting point that God didn't write this story. Someone who knew human nature wrote it, and it hits home because we all know that we're much better at asking God for things than we are at thanking Him.

—**Text: Col 3:15-17**, *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

--**Tim Hansel**: "At any moment in life we have the option to choose an attitude of gratitude, a posture of grace, a commitment to joy."

—A show of gratitude can be occasional, like a boutonniere or corsage worn only on special occasions, but Paul spoke of an attitude of gratitude. We are to wear thanksgiving as an everyday garment (see what he says in other places in Colossians):

1:3--"We always **thank** God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1:12--"... joyfully **giving thanks** to the Father . . ."

2:7--"... overflowing with **thanksgiving**."

4:2--"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and **thankful**."

--**Each aspect of the Christian life can be an arena of thanksgiving.**

I. Gratitude Is Commanded (v.15, *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*)

A. Having a degree in gratitude is part of our Christian education:

1. Gratitude is in the "*core curriculum*" required for every believer.
2. It's not an "*elective*" (We don't graduate without it!)

B. It isn't an *emotional response*, but a *chosen disposition*, a duty:

1. We owe to God: *for our life as a precious gift* from Him.
2. We owe to others: *for our life as an influence on them* (A grateful attitude is contagious and can dispel depression.)

3. We owe to **ourselves**: *for our life as a stewardship of good health* [**Shakespeare wrote**: "Ingratitude, sharper than a serpent's tooth."]
 - a. Gratitude is an *antidote to the poison of jealousy, anger, worry*
 - b. Gratitude is *preventative health-care for the human soul*:
 - (1) It helps our body release *endorphins* [**joy hormones** that help our immune system and bring us a sense of "*peace*" and well-being.]
 - (2) It's part of a *good diet* [We've been told: "*Eat your vegetables!*"]
We also need to feed our mental attitude of *gratitude*.]
 - (3) [We hear people say: "*Are you taking your vitamins?*"] Every day we need a good dose of **Vitamin-T!** Thanksgiving!
- C. Having *gratitude* is both part of our *nature* and part of our *nurture*:
1. "*thankful*" is from the Ang-Sax word, "*thinkfull*" (thoughtful)
 2. We need to think through the nature of gratitude:
 - (1) There's a natural *instinct* to appreciate *situations, things, or people that cause us gladness* (which we may not express).
 - (2) Nature has cycles [water cycle, electric circuits, blood flow] and receiving blessings and expressing thanks should be a cycle.
 3. BUT thanksgiving, though it should be a *natural* response, is also a learned behavior [From a nursery rhyme to teach children good manners: "Hearts, like doors, will open with ease // To very, very little keys, // And don't forget that two of these // Are 'I thank you' and 'If you please.'"]
 - a. We must cultivate an inner attitude of gratitude (Each of us has a *mental garden* and is responsible for what grows there: pretty *roses* or the *thorns*, juicy *peaches* or the *pits*. [**Dr. William Park**: "We see exactly what we train ourselves to see in this life."])
 - b. "be thankful" in Gk. actually means to "become thankful" (it's a growing process— Phillips translation of Col 2:7--"Grow out of him as a plant grows out of the soil it is planted in, becoming more and more sure of the faith as you were taught it, and your lives will overflow with joy and thankfulness.")

TRANS: Gratitude grows best when it's grounded in a relationship with Christ. When we realize what we have in Christ, we should see all of life with an *attitude of gratitude*. **Each aspect of the Christian life should become an arena of thanksgiving.**

II. Gratitude Is to Be Communicated (v.16, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*)

- A. *Communication* and *communion* are similar in sound and meaning.
- We call *Holy Communion* the *Eucharist*, a *thanksgiving*, because Jesus, while facing the gloom of death, spoke *gratitude* over the bread representing His body about to be sacrificed on the Cross. [Pliny called Caesar Tiberius "the gloomiest of mankind." But Jesus, in the shadow of the cross, "took bread, and gave thanks" then "sang a hymn and went out."] (Taking Communion should remind us that we're not dispensers of Caesar's gloom but communicators of Jesus' joy.)
- B. *Gratitude* should be the ongoing *communion of the saints*:
- It creates the atmosphere of receptivity to "the word of Christ":
 - Gratitude* makes room for the Word of God to "dwell in you"
 - "richly" (abundantly)– *gratitude* expands our capacity to receive
 - Gratitude* spurs on a desire to share God's "wisdom" with others
 - It elevates the heart in joy as we "sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in" our "hearts to God."– (*Gratitude lifts up our eyes from the problems of the world to the promises of God.*)

III. Gratitude is Part of our Consecration (v.17, And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.)

- A. As far as attitude goes, "whatever you do, whether in word or deed" encompasses the entirety of life (*going to bed, getting up, eating food, paying bills, buying, selling, coming, going*), all is to be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus"– that's what a consecrated life means.
- B. But what wraps it all up and holds it together is "giving thanks to God the Father through him." (It's why the attitude of gratitude is God's commandment and should be our communication. And it is also the way we live a life of **consecration** to God through Christ.)

CONCLUSION:

–Ingratitude is a sign of human lostness– **Rom.1:21**, For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God **nor gave thanks** to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. **BUT when we find Christ, or rather are found by Him, every aspect of the Christian life becomes an arena of thanksgiving.** –[A poor woman dying in a shabby flat in a London slum said, "I have all I really need: I have Christ!" It inspired a city missionary to write a poem, the last lines of which say: "Oh, my dear, my fellow-sinner! // High or low, or rich or poor, // Can you say with deep thanksgiving– //I have Christ! What want I more?"]

Colossians 3:15-17 (NIV)

15Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

16Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

17And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

"THANKFULNESS"
by Adelaide Proctor

My God, I thank Thee who hast made
The Earth so bright;
So full of splendor and of joy,
Beauty and Light;
So many glorious things are here,
Noble and right!

I thank Thee, too, that Thou hast made
Joy to abound;
So many gentle thoughts and deeds
Circling us around
That in the darkest spot of Earth
Some love is found.

I thank Thee more that all our joy
Is touched with pain;
That shadows fall on brightest hours;
That thorns remain;
So that Earth's bliss may be our guide,
And not our chain.

I thank Thee, Lord, that here our souls,
Though amply blest,
Can never find, although they seek,
A perfect rest,--
Nor ever shall, until they lean
On Jesus' breast!