

WE ALWAYS THANK GOD

Colossians 1:3

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

- a. It is very important to parents that their children learn the virtue of thankfulness. We teach them to say “thank you” any time someone is kind to them. As they get older we teach them the habit of sending the all-important thank you note. We are very intentional and persistent about raising grateful kids.
- b. But are we grateful? You may be very good about saying “thank you” and sending thank notes, but that’s not the kind of thankfulness I’m talking about. I’m talking about thankfulness to God. The most important kind of gratitude. Do you live with an attitude of gratitude to God? Are you good about expressing thanksgiving to God on a daily basis? You might say, “I’m very thankful to God,” but do you know what thankfulness is, and the proper way to express it, and why it is so important?
- c. Thanksgiving is a wonderful holiday, if it is observed correctly – if it is a reminder that we should be thankful every day. However, if it is the only day of the year that we take time to thank God for His blessings, then we have missed the point.
- d. Today we are going to learn to grow in gratitude.

II. TEXT

- a. **Colossians 1:3** “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,”
- b. This is the beginning of Paul’s letter to the saints in Colossae. He says that he always thanks God when he (and his companions) prays for them.
- c. Let me make **three observations about Paul’s thankfulness**:
 - i. Paul thanked God often.
 1. “We always thank God.”
 2. Giving thanks was not something he did occasionally. It was not something he did once in the past. He always thanked God.

3. We should thank God often. Not just annually, but daily. Not just once a day, but all through the day.
- ii. Paul thanked God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 1. Thankfulness is not merely about showing gratitude to others. That is important, but that is only a small part of thankfulness.
 2. Thankfulness is not the feeling of being fortunate, or lucky, for all the good things you have.
 3. Thankfulness is not merely saying, "I'm so thankful for this and that."
 4. Thankfulness must be expressed to God, the source of all blessings.
- iii. Paul thanked God when he prayed.
 1. Giving thanks is an aspect of prayer.
 2. Most people only say prayers of petition; the thankful Christian says prayers of thanksgiving.
 3. Prayer is not just asking for things. The mature Christian says prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.
- d. Let us follow Paul's example and become thankful Christians.

III. WHAT IS THANKFULNESS?

- a. Greek: *eucharisteo*
- b. Definition:
 - i. **Dictionary of Bible Themes**: Heartfelt gratitude to God, expressed in response to His love and mercy.
 - ii. **Open Bible**: Gratitude for blessings.
 - iii. **Jerry Bridges** "Thankfulness to God is a recognition that God in His goodness and faithfulness has provided for us and cared for us, both physically and spiritually. It is a recognition that we are totally dependent upon Him; that all that we are and have comes from God."
- c. **It requires appreciation**. To appreciate is "to understand the true nature of a situation, and realize why it is important or serious" (Macmillan). "I appreciate it" has become a synonym for "thank you,"

but really what it means is “I understand the true nature of your kindness to me. Thank you.”

- i. Thankfulness appreciates the source of the gift.
 1. Thankfulness understands that every good thing is a blessing from God.
 2. **James 1:17** “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”
 3. Thankfulness appreciates the fact that God is the source of every good thing in life – wealth; intelligence; success; love; family; marriage; salvation; athleticism; beauty; physical attractiveness, etc.
- ii. Thankfulness appreciates the significance of the gift.
 1. Thankfulness appreciates the value, the worth of God’s gifts.
 2. Why are God’s gifts so valuable? Because they are unmerited. Unearned. Undeserved.
 3. **Romans 6:23** “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
 4. We deserve the wages of sin, but God showers us with blessings – the greatest of which is eternal life.
 5. The last thing you should ever want is for God to give you what you deserve. You should never shake your fist at God in anger and say, “That’s not fair!” It is a good thing God is not fair, or else we would be suffering the flames of hell.
 6. God is gracious – giving us what we do not deserve. God is merciful – withholding what we do deserve.
 7. **Thomas Watson** “If you wish to be thankful, get a heart deeply humbled with the sense of your own vileness. A broken heart is the best pipe to sound forth God's praise. He who studies his sins, wonders that he has anything, and that God should shine on such a dunghill... O Christian, think of your unworthiness; see yourself as the least of saints, and the chief of sinners—and then you will be thankful.”

- d. **It responds with words.** Gratitude is not merely a feeling; it must be expressed with our words. Just as you must verbalize your gratitude to people, you must also verbalize it to God. **Psalm 109:30** “I will fervently thank the Lord with my mouth” “Our thankfulness is not to be a dumb thing.”
- i. It responds with prayers.
 1. This is what Paul did in Colossians 1:3. He thanked God in his prayers.
 2. Our prayers must be more than requests; they must also be expressions of gratitude.
 3. **Colossians 4:2** “Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving.”
 - ii. It responds with songs.
 1. We must also thank God verbally through singing. This is what praise and worship is all about – thanking God for His goodness to us through Jesus Christ.
 2. **Psalm 28:7** “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. Therefore my heart celebrates, and I give thanks to him with my song.”
 - iii. It responds with advertisements.
 1. The best way to say thanks to a business is to give it a good review; to give referrals.
 2. We must thank God by telling others what He has done for us; by telling everyone we know how good He is.
 3. **Psalm 9:1** “I will thank the Lord with all my heart; I will declare all your wondrous works.”
- e. **It reacts with actions.** Thanksgiving, like love, is not genuine if it is only expressed verbally; it requires more than words. The truly thankful person doesn’t just say “thanks,” but lives gratefully. “Thanksgiving leads to thanksLiving.”
- i. It is obedient.
 1. To say “Thank you, God,” and then live in disobedience, is a contradiction.
 2. **John 14:15** “If you love me, you will keep my commands.”

3. In Mark 1:39-45 Jesus healed a man with leprosy, and He warned him sternly not to tell anyone about the miracle; to keep it a secret. But the man went out and told everyone. The man felt very grateful, but he failed to show gratitude with his actions. True gratitude would have been carefully obeying Jesus' instructions.
 4. The person who is thankful for God's gifts is obedient to God's commands.
- ii. It does not complain.
1. **Philippians 2:14 (ERV)** "Do everything without complaining or arguing."
 2. Complaining and thanksgiving are opposites. Complaining is praising your problems. Thanksgiving is praising God.
 3. To complain is not just to say that God is not good, but that God is bad.
 4. It is offensive when someone fails to express gratitude. But when that person also complains, it adds insult to injury.
- iii. It is cheerful.
1. **Philippians 4:4** "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"
 2. The thankful person is joyful; cheerful. He lives with a song in his heart, and a smile on his face.
 3. To be depressed, or perpetually sad, is to express sorrow rather than thanksgiving.
 4. There is a time for sorrow, but thanksgiving is commanded all the time.
 5. **Ephesians 5:20** "giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,"
 6. A cheerful attitude says, "God is good! It is good to be a Christian!" A sour attitude says, "God is not good! There are no advantages to being a Christian."
- iv. It serves God.
1. Mark 1:29-31 tells the story of Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law of her fever. Immediately after getting

healed, she began to serve Jesus and His disciples. That is gratitude.

2. The way to show thankfulness is with service. Serve the Lord, who has first served you. If you truly appreciate all that God has done for you, then you can't help but devote your life to His service. No one needs to recruit you; no one needs to twist your arm; nobody needs to guilt-trip you into serving. It is your joy to serve God because of all that He has done for you.

IV. WHY BE THANKFUL?

a. It is commanded.

- i. At all times. **Psalm 34:1 (GW)** "I will thank the Lord at all times. My mouth will always praise him."
- ii. Always. **Ephesians 5:20** "giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,"
- iii. Overflowing. **Colossians 2:6-7** "6 So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, 7 being rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and overflowing with gratitude."
- iv. Whatever you do. **Colossians 3:17** "And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."
- v. In everything. **1 Thessalonians 5:18** "give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
- vi. **Unknown** "At all times, in every situation, under every circumstance, before, in and after trials, in bright days of glee, and dark nights of fear."
- vii. **Unknown** "To bless the Lord is never unseasonable."
- viii. How do we give thanks in everything?
 1. **KJV Study Bible** "In every event or circumstance (thing) the Christian is to give thanks to God for the good He can bring out of the event, even should the event be unpleasant. Thankfulness should characterize the Christian life in every circumstance, not thanks for everything, but thanks in everything."

2. **Steven Cole** “We cannot give thanks to God from the heart unless we are submissive to His sovereign hand in our circumstances and we believe that He is working even our trials together for our ultimate good.”

b. It honors God. It shows great respect for God.

- i. **Psalm 50:23** “Whoever sacrifices a thank offering honors me, and whoever orders his conduct, I will show him the salvation of God.”

c. It is well-deserved. Why does God deserve our gratitude?

- i. For His righteousness. God never sins; He hates evil. **Psalm 7:17** “I will thank the Lord for his righteousness”
- ii. For His goodness. **Psalm 106:1** “Hallelujah! Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his faithful love endures forever.”

1. How is God good?

- a. He loves us. **Psalm 107:21** “Let them give thanks to the Lord for his faithful love and his wondrous works for all humanity.”

- i. His love is unconditional. He loves us in spite of our sin.

- ii. His love is unfailing. He will never stop loving us.

- iii. His love is holy. He always does what is best for us.

- iv. His love is supreme. He loves us more than anyone else. He loves us more than we love anything.

- b. He always answers our prayers. **Psalm 118:21** “I will give thanks to you because you have answered me and have become my salvation.”

- c. He sent His Son to save us. **Romans 5:8** “But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

- d. He has forgiven all our sins. **Psalm 103:3** “He forgives all your iniquity”

- e. He has given us His word. **Psalm 19:7** “The instruction of the Lord is perfect, renewing one’s life;

the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise.”

f. He has given us the Holy Spirit. **1 Corinthians 6:19**

“Don’t you know that the your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God?”

g. He works all things together for our good. **Romans**

8:28 “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God”

h. He has given us eternal life. **1 John 2:25** “And this is the promise that he himself made to us: eternal life.”

iii. For His nearness. God is always listening; always watching; always ready to help. **Psalm 46:1 (CEB)** “God is our refuge and strength, a help always near in times of great trouble.”

d. **It is beneficial to us.**

i. **Psalm 92:1** “It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praise to your name, Most High,”

V. **HOW DOES THANKFULNESS BENEFIT US?**

a. **It increases happiness.**

i. When you focus on the good things in your life, it lifts your attitude.

ii. Many psychologists believe we are born with preset happiness levels. Just as everyone has a different body, so we have different personalities. Some are sanguine; others have a melancholy streak. Dr. Robert Emmons of the University of California Davis has demonstrated there is one way to adjust those preprogrammed, inborn personality settings. It’s by developing the habit of consciously giving thanks in the midst of whatever circumstances we may face. “We discovered scientific proof that when people regularly engage in the systematic cultivation of gratitude, they experience a variety of measurable benefits: psychological, physical, and interpersonal,” wrote Dr. Emmons. “The evidence on gratitude contradicts the widely held view that all people have a ‘set-point’ of happiness that cannot be reset by any known means.”

- iii. Unhappiness is caused by focusing on what we don't have; on what's not right. When we thank God, we focus on what we do have, and on what is right in our lives. This leads to happiness.
 - iv. **Jerry Bridges** "Gratitude is a handmaiden of contentment. An ever-growing attitude of gratitude will certainly make us more content since we will be focusing more on what we do have, both spiritually and materially, than on what we do not have. But contentment is more than focusing on what we have. It is focusing on the fact that all we do have; we have by the grace of God. We do not deserve anything we have, materially or spiritually. It is all by His grace."
- b. It is a shield against worry.**
- i. Worry gets you down during the day, and it keep you up at night.
 - ii. **Philippians 4:6-7** "6 Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."
 - iii. How can we overcome worry? Prayer with thanksgiving.
- c. It increases love for God.**
- i. **Psalms 31:23** "Love the Lord, all his faithful ones."
 - ii. When you thank God, you meditate on His goodness to you; on His favors; on His blessings; on His kindness. This translates into more love for Him.
- d. It cultivates holiness.**
- i. **Romans 12:1** "Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship."
 - ii. **C. H. Spurgeon** "The heart must be alive with a gracious gratitude, or the leaf cannot long be green with living holiness."
- e. It protects from pride.**
- i. Pride is thinking too highly of yourself.
 - ii. The way to combat pride is to give thanks; to acknowledge that God, not you, is the source of the good things in your life. This reminds you that you are nothing apart from God's kindness.

VI. HOW TO GROW IN THANKFULNESS

a. Add thanksgiving to your daily prayer time.

- i. Each day pray through the prayer acronym A.C.T.S. Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.

b. Give thanks before your meals.

- i. Jesus gave thanks for the loaves and fish before feeding the multitudes. Mt 15:36; Mk 8:6
- ii. Jesus gave thanks for the cup, and then for the bread, before sharing them with the disciples at the Last Supper. Mt 26:27; Mk 14:23; Lk 22:17-19

c. Sing with your whole heart in church.

- i. **Psalm 138:1** “I will give you thanks with all my heart; I will sing your praise before the heavenly beings.”
- ii. Sing like you mean it. Sing with passion; with joy; with energy; with enthusiasm. Sing as if you are celebrating; as if you are cheering.
- iii. May our thanksgiving songs not be outdone by our football cheers.

VII. CONCLUSION

- a. Luke 17 tells the story of Jesus entering a village between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered the village, ten men with leprosy met Him and begged Him to heal them. And He did. But only one of the ten took the time to go back to Jesus to say thanks. Notice Jesus’ response. Lk 17:17-18 Then Jesus said, ‘Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Didn’t any return to give glory to God except this foreigner?’ There are several important lessons in this story:

- i. Jesus expects gratitude. “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?”
- ii. Giving thanks is one of the ways that we glorify God – which is why we exist. “Didn’t any return to give glory to God...?”
- iii. The majority of people do not give thanks. In this story, only ten percent.

- b. Don’t be in the majority – those who neglect to give thanks to God.

VIII. INVITATION

- a. This morning, I encourage you to make a commitment to cultivate the virtue of thankfulness.
- b. But the reality is that none of us can ever be as thankful to God as we should. We all fall short. And ingratitude is a sin. The wages of sin is death – eternal death. But the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus. God sent His Son to die, in our place, for our sins, so that we could be forgiven, and reconciled to God, and receive eternal life. But to receive this gift we must repent of our sins and commit our lives to Christ, and believe in Jesus Christ.
- c. Won't you do that today?