

## **Thankfulness: The True Test Colossians 3:15-17**

### **Introduction:**

1. The principle of thankfulness is mentioned about 50 or 60 times in the New Testament. Just in this book of Colossians, it is mentioned five times. Colossians 1:5, 2:7, 3:15, 17; 4:2
2. The believer is commanded to be thankful. 3:15, 17
3. But you cannot make someone be truly thankful. It cannot be forced. God will not force you to be thankful.
4. Thankfulness must come from within a person – from the heart.
5. The Bible teaches that a believer **can** be thankful, and **should** be thankful in everything (1 Thessalonians 5:18), and at all times. Ephesians 5:20
6. Here in Colossians 3:15-17, the Bible teaches that a thankful spirit is indicative of the spiritual depth of a Christian's life. Your thankfulness (or lack thereof) really evidences where you are at in your relationship with Christ.
7. When a believer is thankful, it is evidence that:

### **The peace of God is ruling your heart – vs. 15**

1. The context here is living in peace with others. vs. 13-14
  - He's basically saying, "Let the peace of God that dwells in you rule and govern your relationship with others."
2. God has made believers one body in Christ. As one body, we are called to this peace. Ephesians 4:1-3
3. When you allow bitterness and unforgiveness to take over your heart, it is impossible to be a thankful person.
4. This is why he says, "*Let the peace of God rule your hearts,*" and then he adds, "*and be ye thankful.*" When you are unthankful, it is indicative that the peace of God is **not** ruling your heart.
5. Satan desires for us to focus on the wrong actions, bad attitudes, and evil tongues of others, especially when they are directed toward us!
  - He desires this to be your focus and wants it to govern and rule your heart. He wants you to become a bitter, miserable, cynical person.
6. When you're focused on how you've been done wrong, you cannot see clearly God's blessings, and therefore you aren't going to be thankful.

### **The Word of Christ is dwelling in you – vs. 16**

1. Some people have mistakenly thought that this is talking about the words of Jesus when He walked the earth (many Bibles have those words in red).
2. This is speaking of the full revelation of Christ's words from heaven after He ascended and spoke to the apostle Paul, and showed him all the mysteries of this age of grace we live in today. 1:25-27

- The pinnacle of spiritual truth is the truth of grace that Jesus gave to Paul to give to the church, which is the body of Christ. God gave Paul 13 books of the New Testament to explain to us the unsearchable riches of Christ.
3. When the truths of His grace are dwelling in you, the joy and thankfulness just naturally spill forth from you.
    - Look at verse 16. Singing with what? Grace! His grace spills out to others (“*one another*”) and towards Christ (“*in your hearts to the Lord*”).
    - When Paul would write to the church about the marvelous grace of Christ and the truths of grace, sometimes He would just break out in praise. Ephesians 3:20-21
  4. Notice, he did not say, “You get in the Word.” It says, “*the word of Christ dwell in you.*”
    - The word “ *dwell* ” means to “inhabit; to be at home.”
    - You can mechanically get in the Word every day, but that doesn’t mean it is getting in you. Do you approach the Bible as a love letter from God to you, or as a textbook or a rule book?
  5. When the Word of Christ and the truths of His grace are in you, thankfulness isn’t something you have to remember or make yourself do. It is spontaneous and natural.
  6. Everything outward in your life may be falling apart, but there is a word in you and a grace in you. You can’t get over it, and you can’t help but praise your Savior and thank Him for what He’s done in you.

### **Christ is living through you – vs. 17**

1. Verse 17 is about as all-encompassing as you can get. Whatever you say or do, do it in the name of Jesus.
  - The word “ *name* ” carries the idea of authority or power.
2. So the idea here is this: whatever you do, do it through the power of Jesus Christ. As you live your Christian life, it should be Christ **in you**, working **through you** mightily (1:27, 29). Whatever you do, you do it through His power, His strength, and His ability.
3. Everything we do carries a choice: self-dependence or Christ-dependence.
  - We either do it through our fleshly power and strength, or depend solely on Christ to do it through us.
  - God desires that we come to the place where we renounce self-sufficiency, and rest in Christ’s sufficiency.
4. What is the natural reaction after Christ has worked through us? Verse 17 says “*giving thanks.*”
  - If we recognize that Christ did it through us, then to Him belongs all the glory, praise, and thanks. We just want to fall on our knees and say, “Thank you, Jesus!”
  - If we think **we** did it, what does this lead to? We get puffed up with pride, and we want people to praise us, pat us on the back, and recognize us.

**In Conclusion:**

1. What I want you to see is that an unthankful spirit is really a warning sign of some serious internal problems.
2. When we find ourselves with a negative, critical spirit (gripping, complaining), it is a warning sign that the peace of God is not ruling our hearts – the Word of Christ is not dwelling in us, and we're not allowing Christ to live through us.
3. Do you possess a thankful spirit? Do you see and recognize God's blessings every day?