
Special Message - Thanksgiving Gravy

Colossians 3:17 | Sunday, November 18, 2018 | By Brian Brookins

SPECIAL MESSAGE

THANKSGIVING GRAVY

Colossians 3:17

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

Thanksgiving is a unique and wonderful holiday. It is probably my favorite of all the holidays. I think it requires the least work. I mean it in this way. A lot of the holidays that we celebrate -- you actually have to fight to keep the spiritual focus and emphasis, for it to be a blessing and not a drain. Sometimes, if I'm honest, Christmas is especially that way. But Thanksgiving -- there's something about the way we do Thanksgiving and the very character of it that it reinforces the right idea, and I'm grateful for that.

Obviously, if you are American, there is a significance for us in terms of why and how we celebrate Thanksgiving. But I think it's also a very biblical idea. In fact, the giving of thanks is something that is emphasized strongly in scripture. I think it's impossible to overstate its significance and importance. And the thing about it is, it's so easy to assume it, to forget it, and to fail to do it.

Many of us, maybe I could say most of us, frequently do the opposite. We complain. We gripe. We moan. And we are called to this place of giving thanks all the time, in all circumstances. This theme is repeated over and over and over in scripture.

This particular verse -- Colossians 3:17 -- is a great life verse. A lot of times people pick life verses. Well, this is a good one, because it actually summarizes how to live as a Christian. It provides for you in one verse what we should give ourselves to every day, all day long. **Paul says everything you do, everything, in word or deed -- do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks.** Giving thanks through Jesus.

It's a call, and we'll talk about what it means to do something in the name of Jesus, and why that is emphasized with Thanksgiving. But let me say that it's not just a summary of how to live as a

Special Message - Thanksgiving Gravy

Colossians 3:17 | Sunday, November 18, 2018 | By Brian Brookins

Christian, how to act as a Christian. It's actually a summary of this entire section in the book of Colossians.

Colossians is not a very long book. It's a book with this view of Christ: exalted, filling everything, renewing everything; the Lord Jesus Christ, risen and ascended, ruling over creation and redemption. And if you are a Christian, (listen to this) you are *in Christ*. And Christ, the Lord of all, is *in you*, and he is the hope of the world. And as the Church, Jesus fills us. He embodies us and we are his people -- the Lord Jesus Christ.

He begins this emphasis of "How do we live?" all the way back in Chapter 2, verse 6. "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him..." He begins then to unpack two things. He layers his teaching, because he is dealing with a certain false teaching that he wants to eradicate. He is laying in this really robust understanding of who Jesus is, and he's telling you on top of it: "This is how you live. This is how you live. This is how you live."

He's saying that there are these five virtues. He talks about compassion, heartfelt compassion, and kindness, and gentleness and longsuffering, patience -virtues that are modeled for us in Christ and now are ours. He says, "Put those on. Then with one another I want you to be forbearing, I want you to be forgiving, and then I want you to tie it all up with love." He is teaching us how to live as Christians. The text for today, chapter 3 verse 17, is a summary of all of that.

What's interesting about it is it's actually one of three verses, Colossians 3:15, Colossians 3:16 and Colossians 3:17, and each one is a summary. Let's look at those. Colossians 3:15 is just going back two verses before where we were. "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And...be thankful." This verse is a summary. It sounds like it's a summary about your individual peace, because Paul talks about peace in your heart. But he is actually summarizing here the previous paragraph where he is talking to the Church. He is telling them, "Listen, no matter what, forgive one another and be forbearing and be gentle and love one another. There needs to be a harmony in the body of Christ, where there is no unforgiveness, no undealt with offense. We are aggressively loving one another."

He summarizes that. This is a summary of community life. The peace of Christ -- let it rule. I would say, I'm forgiven because of what Jesus has done and that allows me to forgive you. When you are standing there looking at me and talking to me, I have to think, "He's not judging me about what I wear. He's not judging me about how I raise my kids. He's not judging me because of this or that.

Special Message - Thanksgiving Gravy

Colossians 3:17 | Sunday, November 18, 2018 | By Brian Brookins

He accepts me. He loves me. His acceptance of me is one where he wants me to grow and be transformed and to be renewed in Jesus.” This is govern, this is rule. Jesus is the umpire of our fellowship. Let the peace of Christ manage everything that happens, Church.

Most important. Jesus said it was so important, he said something a pastor has probably never said to you. He said if you are going to give and you have not dealt with the offense in your heart, don't give. When is the last time a pastor told you: “Don't give”? Jesus understood there is something more important here, more important than the collection of money. It is your relationship with your brother and sister in Jesus Christ. Church, Riverside, you do this well, but let's not assume it. This is a summary. Are you with me?

Okay, next verse, verse 16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” This is a summary about worship. You could say, I would say, this is one of the great power verses in the Bible. This verse tells you how to get more spiritual power. **There are two sources of power in your life - do you know what they are for the Christian? The Spirit of God and the Word of God.** You could line up Ephesians 5:18 parallel to this, where we are told to be filled with the Spirit. Then what follows is almost identical.

But here he says instead of being filled with the Spirit, let the word of Christ, let the message about Jesus Christ, let the gospel, let this truth - that you are completely forgiven because of what Jesus Christ has done for you, that he has predestined you to be formed and shaped into Jesus himself for all of eternity - let that overwhelming good news richly dwell in you. Not some kind of superficial religious slogan that you throw out all the time, but this inexhaustible wealth of who Christ is, the Lord of the universe dying for you, being raised for you, living in you, ascended on high. “Teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing hymns and songs, spiritual songs, all kinds of singing, and get to church on time, with thankfulness in your heart.”

You see, when you gather and you sing (we sing all types of songs in different types of ways and we try to pull you in to actually sing) you are massaging and internalizing the truth of who Jesus is, and it empowers your life. It fills you up. So you come, seriously, you come on time, you come early, you prepare your heart. If I can't come, it's great that I stream, but if I can, I want to be here with the people of God, because this is a time to receive and to be renewed. Jesus imparts himself into my heart.

Special Message - Thanksgiving Gravy

Colossians 3:17 | Sunday, November 18, 2018 | By Brian Brookins

This is a summary of worship. This is a summary of power. Then verse 17, a summary of all of life: “Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Did you notice something? Did you notice verse 15? “And be thankful.” Verse 16: “With thankfulness in your hearts to God. Verse 17: “Giving thanks to God the Father through Jesus Christ.” Do you think it’s important?

Okay, here it is. Here’s the message. It’s the gravy. It is the topping. It is the sauce. It goes on everything. It finishes, it completes, it flavors, and you find it over and over and over again in scripture: **Be grateful. In everything, in every circumstance, always giving thanks.** Paul never tires of saying this to us, calling us to give thanks.

In order to do that I want, for a second, to talk about what it means to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. What does it mean? I’m going to give you four ways to look at it, just as a general overview. Every single thing I do and everything I don’t do, every meal I eat, the way I take care of myself, the way I rest, the way I work, the way I love my spouse, everything, what I abstain from -- all of it I do in the name of Jesus. There are four ways to look at it.

I. **Glorifying Christ.**

I ask myself, “What will glorify Jesus? How do I do this in a way that brings glory to who he is? This is the purpose of my life. This is the direction. This is due north. This governs how we parent.

I learned this from my own Dad. Beth and I never ever said to our kids, “Listen, you can’t do this because I’m a pastor and we have a standard.” No, no, no. “You can’t do this because it dishonors God. You can’t do this because I am saying to you you’re not ready. As your dad, I would dishonor God if I don’t father you in a way where I am true to that conviction.” That also meant many times coming and saying, “You know what? I have failed. I have dishonored God. Forgive me.” This is the litmus test for us.

II. **Trusting Christ.**

But we don’t just live to please God in our own strength. We do it by faith. We do it by trusting in Christ. And as we trust in him, he gives us strength. This is part of what it means to pray in the

Special Message - Thanksgiving Gravy

Colossians 3:17 | Sunday, November 18, 2018 | By Brian Brookins

name of Jesus, to live in the name of Jesus, to do all things in the name of Jesus. And then, we are following him.

III. Following Christ.

We want to be like Christ. This fills out especially #1: God is producing in us Christ-like character, the fruit of the Spirit of God in the power of God as we trust Jesus. Then, beautifully, #4 -- it's about a relationship.

IV. Knowing Christ.

We are knowing Christ. As we give ourselves, this is not just a legalistic work; it is relationship as we grow in our knowledge of Jesus.

So that leads us to a place -- we are to do all of this with a heart of gratitude, with thanksgiving. I want to give you a few summary statements. I made this outrageous statement. I know it's a little corny, but it's actually the metaphor that I want to use to communicate this truth. "No, Brian, it's not corny. It's actually creative and original. How did you do it?" I'll just encourage myself if you won't help me.

1. It completes the dish.

Your life is incomplete without thanksgiving. If I could say it like this, this is what happens. Everyone open your Bible to Colossians 3, if you would. Just open up the scripture for a second. We saw it in the summary verse, about how we are to treat one another. Verse 15: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful." Here is what he is doing. He is connecting how you treat one another to what God has done for you. It will become clear as we move back. Go to verse 12. "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience." Here is what he is saying. **"God chose you. God loves you. God made you his. God did this. This is who you are! Now, be who you are. Act like who you are."**

Special Message - Thanksgiving Gravy

Colossians 3:17 | Sunday, November 18, 2018 | By Brian Brookins

Over and over and over, that's his theme. **Your identity is in Jesus Christ because of what Jesus Christ has done for you. You just receive it as a gift.** If you are here and you're not a Christian, if you are saying, "Brian, I've never trusted in Jesus; I couldn't honestly say that I have said, 'God forgive me because Jesus paid for my sin,'" today you can trust in Jesus Christ. **Today Jesus Christ can be your savior.**

And when that happens, you move into his family. You immediately have a whole new identity. You get a new last name. Revelation actually talks about how you have a name that God has given you that's written in his Book of Life. Your identity is in Jesus Christ. What he's doing is, he is telling you to live out that identity. **How does thanksgiving complete the process? Well, it reinforces your identity.** It's glorious!

I had this crazy thing happen today. This is the only way I could of to illustrate this. It's really silly and I'm asking you for forgiveness in advance. I was getting in the car and calling my buddy Javier. This is not his fault, but as I was getting ready to call, I dropped the phone and shattered the face of the phone. It's a new phone. And I said, "Glory to God. Thank you!"

Okay, I did not curse. I did not lose it, but I get on the phone with Javier and said, "Javier, something tragic has happened. My phone is busted." And I got one of those little glass splinters in my finger. Have you ever had that? One of those really tough injuries that are hard to overcome? Yes, I hear compassion coming at me from the front row. And my brother Javier said, "Brian, that is tragic." He commiserated with me.

I am telling you this, but it makes me look so much better than I am. This is all false advertising. But I was meditating on this text and I asked myself: What does it look like to have a broken phone in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ while giving thanks? I am so spiritual sometimes, it's amazing! I told you it was a complete false advertisement.

So I said, "You know what? Someone is going to get saved at the Apple Store, right?! Maybe a whole bunch of people! We may have revival at the Apple Store in Boca. Tuesday, 2:25, that's my appointment. Be there!" I so dreaded going to the Apple Store the week of Thanksgiving. Ohhh, right? Now you feel my pain. I tried to go somewhere else. I went to another store that was an Apple representative but, "Oh, we don't have that screen." Sorry. I'm complaining now. See, that's what you don't want to do. Is there a way where you can say, "I can glorify Christ, I will be a witness,

Special Message - Thanksgiving Gravy

Colossians 3:17 | Sunday, November 18, 2018 | By Brian Brookins

I will come to know him more?" Listen, he's God! He's Lord of the universe and he directs your life! Stop complaining! Right?

I'm preaching to myself, but he is directing your life. Do you know what? He wouldn't change one thing in your life. He has not blown it. He's not in heaven, saying, "Oh, first mistake. Ah, I didn't see that coming." Never! He's God! He loves you! He gave his Son for you. Trust him and give thanks.

You know, there have been times, many times, where I've broken something, dropped it, lost it, left it, and I have gotten really angry. Many times where I have sinned in a very ugly, demonstrative, ungodly way. And you know what? Jesus died for that sin. And when I stand before God, he will not say, "Brian, you were a lunatic!" He will say, "You are dressed in my Son. Come in."

That alone is good news, right? But he said, "Brian, I love you so much, I'm not going to leave you in that mess. I am working in your life to transform you. And I know you're old and you're getting older, but I am bringing Jesus out in you. And other people around you, they say, "Man, look at what Christ is doing! We thought he was hopeless, but God is actually doing it!" That's part of what it means. It fills out your identity.

Quickly...did you hear the wind as I was running? I was moving so fast, just - FLASH!

2. It provides the flavor.

Christian, follower of Jesus Christ: **Giving thanks is the flavor of your life. It's not the flavor of the month. It's not just Thanksgiving. It should flavor everything you do.** We could talk a lot about this. That's why over and over, Paul repeats it, because you have every reason to be constantly grateful.

3. It spreads the flavor.

When you have a grateful heart and you express it naturally, not in put-on ways, but it's really growing in your life, then other people can't help but see the light of Christ shining through you. It actually is the witness that God is after in your life.

Special Message - Thanksgiving Gravy

Colossians 3:17 | Sunday, November 18, 2018 | By Brian Brookins

If you will allow me, I will just say that some of you are not very good advertisements for Christianity. Some of us sometimes just...if the sour look on our face is what Christ produces... Right? We have those moments, those weeks, those lives. This is why the scripture says little things like this: "Greet one another with a holy kiss." Now, if I don't know you, don't kiss me after the service. That's not the message. But here's the message: The way you greet people is important. It matters. It's an opportunity to express gratefulness.

I am aware, friends, that there are going to be some pockets of people here in an extreme trial. I am not at all putting guilt on you or telling you, "Okay, you've got to just fake it." That's not the message at all. So please hear me in that. There is still an appropriate expression of this message in your life in that regard. It spreads the flavor. #4 is so good.

4. It increases and multiplies your joy.

Think of it this way. **Every time you give thanks, it's like experiencing the blessing all over again. It's completing your identity. You are becoming who you are.** You are verbalizing: "Look! Look at what God's doing! This is who I am! It's increasing and multiplying the effect of all that God is doing. It empowers your life. I think that's part of why Paul says, "Let the peace of Christ rule. Do it with thanksgiving." Let the word of Christ dwell richly within you, then speak it to one another. Encourage, admonish, exhort, praise God together. Do it with thanksgiving, because it's a factor that comes in and multiplies all the effectiveness of it.

By the way, complaining and grumbling has the same impact to the negative. It's like reliving the bad experience over and over again and making it worse and worse and worse so that it becomes worse and worse in reality in your life.

5. Finally, it moisturizes your life.

Feeling old and dried out and worn out? You're irritable and grumpy? You're cracking? Thanksgiving will soften your life. It will moisturize. It will revitalize. It will energize. When it's rooted in who Christ is, what he has done in your life, you cannot believe... When the Spirit of God brings his truth into your life, you will realize how you may have... I have done this, okay? This is just

Special Message - Thanksgiving Gravy

Colossians 3:17 | Sunday, November 18, 2018 | By Brian Brookins

a confession. Let me put it in the first person. There have been times where I was unhappy and so grumpy that I never wanted to say anything good, because I was cultivating an irritable spirit.

I would get up in the morning. My wife would say, "How did you sleep?" No way I am going to say I slept great, slept like a baby. "Ah, not very good." Just so begrudging to be positive about anything. I've done that. Maybe not this week, but I've done that. There is something that pulls us into that that says: "Feel sorry for me. I'm not going to give you an inch. I'm unhappy with you. I'm holding you in debt." The gospel frees us from this. "No, no! I've paid that! Let it go!" Rejoice and walk in the cumulative effect of the cross of Jesus Christ. And the great news is, when you get into that turned-in kind of mode, God loves you. He interrupts you. He stops you and he visits you. It's glorious. Amen?

Let me just say this as a conclusion. Remember this little outline? Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus? Glorifying Christ? Trusting in Christ? Following Christ? Knowing Christ? You say, "Okay, Brian, help me. I want to be grateful, but I feel like it's superficial. I feel like I'm picking really superficial things. 'Thank God for the weather.' That's great to be thankful for, but somehow it's not reverberating and it lacks substance."

I would tell you, come back to this little list and go in reverse order. Start with Knowing Christ. Start with: Lord Jesus, I want to know you and who you are and what you've done. And I want to follow you. I want you to be my Savior and the Lord of my life and I'm trusting in you."

If you've never done that, this is how you actually become a Christian. You follow Christ, trusting him, receiving grace, receiving salvation. But if you are a Christian, this cycle should be repeating over and over in your life -- just growing in my knowledge of the Lord, learning to follow him by trusting in him and the strength that he gives me, that he might be glorified in my life.

So this Thursday, if you have turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, just put gravy over all of it. Alright? And when you do, give thanks. Say, Lord, complete my identity in you.

I'm going to ask you to bow your head if you would, please. I want to pause before we close out the service to say if there's anyone here and it's not settled in your life that Jesus has saved you, I want to pray for you this morning. I'm going to ask in this moment where our heads are bowed, would you lift up your hand? I'm not going to call you out, but I'm going to pray for you. I want to pray for you. Okay? Some people are lifting a hand. I think it will help you just to identify that. I haven't

Special Message - Thanksgiving Gravy

Colossians 3:17 | Sunday, November 18, 2018 | By Brian Brookins

nailed this down and I want to. I want prayer. I want to know Jesus Christ. I'm going to give it a minute more. Alright, I'm going to pray for you.