

Gratitude

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A. Introduction

(Genesis 3:1-5)

Culture is constantly bombarding us with messages of discontentment.

One of the more distinct memories of this discontented message came through a series of commercials that were very popular almost 20 years ago. You may remember them.

Mac vs. PC commercials.

I proudly confess that I am a Mac guy and have been since 2008. So, they got me!

But those messages don't only come from "the world or media." They are also the first lie that we were told by the enemy.

"Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

"Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. "It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"

"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

Genesis 3:1b-5 (NLT)

This idea of dissatisfaction is not only at the beginning of the story in the Bible but throughout. In fact, you could do a study on grumbling or complaining in the Bible and you will find many examples.

Do you remember the Israelites complaining about the food they received from heaven? How about when they made a golden calf? How about when they complained that they were not strong enough to take the Promised Land?

Many times, Jesus told people to stop grumbling or confronted their complaints.

But as followers of Christ, we are not called to a life of complaint. Instead, we should be geared towards gratitude.

I would like for you to see two things about gratitude today as we look forward to Thanksgiving this week.

B. Gratitude

1. Gratitude is the **OVERFLOW** of hearts rooted in the Spirit.

(Colossians 3:15-16. C/R: Isaiah 52:9-10; Matthew 4:4; Philippians 1:6)

And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom He gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.

Colossians 3:15-16 (NLT)

Paul, in the letter to the Colossians, references thanksgiving 6 times. Twice in our passage today.

What makes the mention of thanksgiving so impactful is that Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Colossae while he was a Roman prisoner.

The distinct heart cry of someone whose heart does not belong to Christ is one of ungratefulness or dissatisfaction. But those whose hearts belong to Christ are fulfilled and can be satisfied.

There are two distinct ways that Paul describes this type of satisfied life in this passage. Peace and the Word of Christ.

Peace

The peace of Christ should rule in our hearts. Where does this peace come from?

It comes from the finished work of Christ.

The overwhelming guilt of our own sin, our consciences are cleared, and all shame is carried all by Jesus. And ultimately, we are right with God by His death, burial and resurrection on the cross.

But this verse lets us know that we must allow peace to be the judge in our lives.

Word of Christ

The message of Christ must dwell in us richly. In other translations, this phrase is translated *the Word of Christ*. It is important to note this. Paul is once again communicating that you will only find satisfaction in this life by coming to Jesus.

But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes from the mouth of God.

Matthew 4:4 (NLT)

This idea makes me think of turkey. Hot take, turkey is the most overrated food in all of holiday offerings. If it were so good, you would eat it all year round. Disagree, feel free to email Bryan Jones.

Turkey Brine: But if you are going to make a turkey, you should brine it.

Now, I won't deep dive into brining here, but the idea is that you have a solution of salt and water and drop your protein of choice in. The salt will seek to penetrate the meat until the solution of brine and meat is consistently salty.

In the same way, this is how we should view the Word of God's influence in our lives. When is it enough, when the same view on every aspect of the Word is consistently present in your lives.

The Word must get down deep into our souls and that takes consistent time daily with God.

When it comes to gratitude and how we view things, often we view it only in terms of reflecting on the past. But in the Scriptures and specifically in the writings of Paul, thanksgiving is not viewed in only a temporal sense. But also, in an overall attitude and approach to life.

The Old Testament is an example of this; hundreds, if not thousands of years before Christ, the Messiah, enters the scene, we see thankfulness for this future fulfillment of the promises of God.

*Let the ruins of Jerusalem break into joyful song,
for the LORD has comforted His people.
He has redeemed Jerusalem.
The LORD has demonstrated His holy power
before the eyes of all the nations.
All the ends of the earth will see
the victory of our God.*

Isaiah 52:9-10 (NLT)

This is spoken as if it has already happened.

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

Philippians 1:6 (NLT)

This is the very picture of the attitude of a follower of Christ. Christ has accomplished something that started something good in you. But Christ is perfecting it presently in you and we believe that one day it will be perfect and finished in you. It is important to note that there is this thread that connects the event of the cross and redemption, and rescue of God's people that also prompts us to future praise, namely that God will once again do what He said He will do.

I also want you to see that transformed hearts make transformed voices. When we recognize God's rightful place, we sing!

My pastor growing up said a Christian is to have 3 holy books in his life. God's book (the Bible), our pocketbook, and our hymn book.

When God changes us, we have a new song in our hearts and lives. This doesn't mean we will become musicians, but it does mean that we should have a desire to sing to God.

The second thing I want you to see about gratitude is this.

2. When Christ shapes our ACTIONS, GRATITUDE defines our life.

(Colossians 3:17. C/R: Psalm 40; 2 Corinthians 4:8-9)

And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Colossians 3:17 (NLT)

This results in a different way of living or in a different way of walking. As we live according to God's Word, we become identified as grateful.

But not only that but there is a distinct way of thanksgiving that is particular to children of God. That is worship through singing.

Singing to God privately and singing to God publicly are about our roles and duty more than they are about our skills. They are also an overflow of a person changed by God.

When you receive new life, Christ writes a new song in your soul.

But I also want you to see that complaint is the gateway drug to idolatry. Psalm 106 is the best example of this. The author shows many ways in which the Israelites complained and then went to find their needs met in some other way than through their relationship and devotion to God.

Many times He [God] delivered them, but they were bent on rebellion and they wasted away in their sin. Yet He took note of their distress when He heard their cry; for their sake He remembered His covenant and out of His great love He relented.

Psalm 106:43-45 (NIV)

Grateful People	Ungrateful People
Freedom and joy	Disgruntled, Complainers
Obedience to God	Disobedience and Rebellion
Harmonious Living with Others	Divisive and Fractured Relationships
Worshippers of God	Worshippers of Self

Benefits of Gratitude

There has been a lot of scientific research done on the effects of gratitude on the brain in recent years.

There is a benefit to our mind, our body's health, and even our relationships with others.

- **Psychological Well-being:** Regular expressions of gratitude are linked to increased happiness, life satisfaction, and reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety.
[Greater Good Science Center](#)
- **Physical Health:** Grateful individuals often report better sleep quality, lower blood pressure, and stronger immune systems.
[Greater Good Science Center](#)
- **Social Relationships:** Gratitude acts as "social glue," enhancing relationships by fostering trust, support, and mutual respect.

But one thing I feel I need to point out is that some of the brain research and the connection between gratitude and anxiety is astounding. Many neuroscientists believe that your brain cannot process negative and positive simultaneously.

Which means, you cannot dwell on the bad and expect the good to grow. Said another way, A mind that is focused on the positive has no room for the negative.

The danger of the power of positive thinking.

Now, I want to be clear here. I am not advocating for the power of positive thinking.

It is important to understand that thanksgiving or gratitude is not simply a recognition of good things or even a way to think positively. In fact, this type of thinking can be dangerous. Rather, thanksgiving is more clearly understood as God-centeredness or as we have talked about here at Brookwood. It is the attitude or describing characteristic of someone with Jesus at the center of their life.

Should we be positive thinkers as followers of Christ? Yes. But we should also not dismiss reality. Being thankful for evil is not a faithful interpretation of the Scriptures.

David Pao explains it in this way.

‘Is it possible to thank him for the evil events themselves?’ (Best 1998: 514). This question itself reflects a misunderstanding of the Pauline call to thanksgiving. We are not asked to be elated over the news of tragedies. We are, however, called to focus on God and God alone in spite of all that can happen to us and around us. Rather than being obsessed with the well-being of our own selves, acts of thanksgiving force us to worship the one who deserves all glory and honour. In the face of evil, our responsibility is to be faithful to him who is the Lord of all. To give thanks in all circumstances is, therefore, to challenge the power of Satan as we participate in the cosmic struggle, anticipating the consummation of the eschatological victory that is rooted in the cross and the empty tomb¹

Grief is a great example of this. Many of you are entering into your holiday seasons for the first time without loved ones. It would be irresponsible of us as followers of Christ to not acknowledge that there is loss. Real pain. Real grief. And to dismiss those feelings and only think positively is not living out the full human experience that we see reflected in the biblical authors.

But we also grieve differently. (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)

We trust God in the midst of circumstances that we do not understand. We believe what God says in His Word over what we might feel in our hearts.

This week you will have a tangible way to share with your family how God has blessed you and changed your life. Do not let this week pass you by without sharing the reason for your gratitude.

If you haven’t had God, give you new life and you recognize that your life is marked more by grumbling than by gratitude, we will have folks down front who would love to share with you the way to surrender to Christ and have a new way to live life.

Let’s pray.

¹ David W. Pao, [*Thanksgiving: An Investigation of a Pauline Theme*](#), ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 13, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2002), 105–106.