

**The Lifestyle of Thankfulness**  
**Lesson 3**  
**“Gratitude That Guides Our Living”**

A Bible Study Lesson of The Mt. Zion Church

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November 19, 2025

*“Gratitude is the ability to experience life as a gift. It liberates us from the prison of self-preoccupation.” –John Ortberg*

**Introduction:** The book of Colossians is one of Paul’s **Prison Epistles**—written while he was under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:16, 30–31). Even in confinement, Paul wrote letters filled with hope, strength, and an unmistakable emphasis on **gratitude**, despite his circumstances.

The believers in Colossae, whom Paul never met, had begun drifting into a “Jesus *plus*” religion—adding Jewish legalism, Greek philosophical ideas, and local folk spirituality to their faith (Col. 2:8, 16–18). These influences were slowly eroding their confidence in the **sufficiency of Christ** and leading them back into spiritual insecurity, fear, and striving.

Paul writes to anchor them again in the truth that:

- **Christ is supreme** (Col. 1:15–20)
- **Christ is sufficient** (Col. 2:9–10)
- **And because Christ is enough, believers can live with deep, enduring thankfulness.**

In fact, thankfulness is one of the defining marks Paul repeatedly emphasizes in this letter:

- “...*giving thanks to the Father...*” (Col. 1:12)
- “...*continue to live your lives in Him... overflowing with thankfulness.*” (Col. 2:6–7)
- “...*and be thankful.*” (Col. 3:15)
- “...*giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*” (Col. 3:17)
- “...*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*” (Col. 4:2)

When believers recognize that **Christ has fully accomplished their salvation**, they are freed from fear, striving, superstition, and performance-based religion. Their hearts can rest—and therefore they can give thanks.

Paul’s aim is not only to correct false teaching but to lead the church into a mature, steady, Christ-centered gratitude that shapes their unity, worship, and everyday living (Col. 3:12–17). By the end of this lesson, students will understand the role thankfulness plays in our living for and through Christ. We truly can live with joy knowing that He finished His work and we have all that we need in Jesus!



Key Scripture: Colossians 3:15-17

## I. **Peace and Thankfulness**—vs. 15

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

Chapter three shifts the reader from a focus on what to put off to a renewed vision of how followers of Christ are called to live. Turning away from wrong thinking and destructive behaviors is only half the journey; believers must also intentionally turn **toward** thoughts and actions that honor Christ. As God’s children, our transformed lives become visible evidence to the world that we have been made alive through Jesus (cf. Col. 3:1–4).

One of the defining characteristics of those made alive in Christ is **peaceful unity**. The peace Paul highlights in this passage is not merely inward calm—it is a relational peace displayed among believers. Division, hostility, and competition for prominence are not marks of the people of God. Paul reminds us that we are **one body** and therefore cannot mirror the world’s patterns of rivalry or self-promotion (Col. 3:11). Instead, we are called to reflect the peace we now possess because of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 5:1).

Paul’s phrase, “**Let the peace of Christ rule...**” carries the imagery of an *umpire* or *referee*. Christ’s peace is to be the governing force that directs our decisions and reminds us constantly of the reconciliation we have with God. When peace is ruling within us, unity becomes possible among us.



This deep awareness of peace with God naturally produces **thankfulness**. Why? Because what humanity deserved was continued hostility—a declaration of war due to our sin (Rom. 5:10). Instead, God initiated a peace treaty sealed by the blood of Jesus (Col. 1:20). Gratitude flows from knowing we are no longer enemies but beloved sons and daughters.

Therefore, each time we feel ourselves drifting toward disunity, frustration, or division, we must return to the reality of Christ's peace. The gospel not only reconciled us to God but also calls us to actively **pursue peace within the body of Christ** (Eph. 4:3).

### **Reflection Questions:**

- How does remembering your peace with God shape the way you interact with other believers?

## **II. The Word of (About) Christ and Thankfulness—vs. 16**

*<sup>16</sup> Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.*

In verse 16, Paul moves from telling believers *what* to do to showing them *how* to do it. We can live in peace and cultivate a heart of thankfulness **by allowing the message of Christ to dwell richly among us**. The word “richly” means in abundance, overflowing—indicating that the gospel is meant to fill the church, not simply visit it.

### **The Interdependent Commitments That Produce Thankfulness**

Paul highlights that a Christ-centered life—one marked by peace and gratitude—does not develop accidentally. It grows through three interconnected spiritual commitments. Each of these commitments deepens our understanding of Jesus, and together they cultivate a heart that overflows with thankfulness.

#### **1. Growing in Knowledge of Christ — “Knowing WHO He is”**

A thankful heart begins with an unclouded vision of Jesus. The more we know of His character, His work on the cross, His forgiveness, His patience, and His power, the more naturally gratitude arises.

When believers study Christ through Scripture, they are reminded that:

- He rescued us from darkness (Col. 1:13).
- He made peace through His blood (Col. 1:20).
- He is fully God in bodily form (Col. 2:9).
- He has forgiven all our sins (Col. 2:13–14).

Knowledge of Christ is not mere information; it is fuel for gratitude.  
**You cannot meditate on who Jesus is and remain ungrateful.**

## **2. Growing in Wisdom in Christ — “Knowing HOW to live”**

Wisdom is the practical outworking of knowing Jesus. It shows believers how to apply the gospel to real situations—relationships, conflict, speech, decisions, and daily pressures. Paul emphasizes that Christ is the source of all wisdom (Col. 2:3), and as believers grow in His wisdom, their gratitude increases because they experience God’s guidance, protection, and faithfulness in everyday life.

Wisdom teaches us to say:

*“Lord, thank You for showing me how to live in a way that honors You.”*

Every step of obedience becomes another occasion for thanksgiving.

## **3. Growing in Worship of Christ — “Responding with praise and gratitude”**

Worship is the natural response to knowing and walking with Jesus. When believers sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, they are not performing—they are **giving thanks** for who Christ is and what He has done.

Paul is intentional here: worship cannot be separated from thanksgiving.

It is gratitude expressed.

It is truth celebrated.

It is faith vocalized.

Worship helps believers remember that everything they have—peace, forgiveness, community, hope—comes from God.

As we rehearse God’s goodness through worship, gratitude is strengthened and renewed.

### **Reflection Questions:**

- Which of these commitments—knowledge, wisdom, or worship—needs more intentional focus in your life right now?
- How has gratitude grown when you have focused more deeply on Jesus in one of these areas?

### III. **Everything and Thankfulness**—vs 17

*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.*

This section of Colossians concludes with a sweeping, all-inclusive command: **“Whatever you do…”** Paul’s wording leaves no part of our lives untouched. Every action, every conversation, every decision is to reflect a life fully dedicated to Jesus. For many believers, this is challenging because faith is often unintentionally compartmentalized into the two hours spent in weekly worship. This mindset is a subtle trap of the enemy, tempting us to divide life into “spiritual” moments and “everyday” moments. Scripture, however, allows no such division. We are followers of Jesus **all day, every day**, in every environment and situation.

To do something **“in the name of the Lord Jesus”** carries deep meaning. It involves:

- **Acting under His authority**
- **Reflecting His character**
- **Representing Him to others**



This is the alignment of word and deed—*talking about it and being about it*. And all of it occurs under Christ’s leadership. At no point are we free to operate outside His boundaries, but these boundaries do not confine us; they **free us**. As we live submitted to Christ, our obedience becomes an ongoing expression of gratitude. The very act of surrendering our lives—our choices, our speech, our responses—to His rule is a form of thanksgiving. Because through Christ, we learn who we are, how to live, how to please God, and how to navigate all situations. That clarity and direction stir our hearts toward thankfulness.



#### **Reflection Questions:**

- How might your daily decisions change if you remembered that “whatever you do” should reflect Christ?
- How does submitting to Christ’s authority in everyday life become an act of thanksgiving rather than a burden?

## **Conclusion: A Life Marked by Peace, the Word, and Thankfulness**

Colossians 3:15–17 teaches us that gratitude is not a seasonal feeling—it is the natural overflow of a life centered on Christ. When His peace rules our hearts, unity becomes possible. When His Word dwells richly among us, wisdom, and worship follow. And when every part of our lives is submitted to His name, daily living becomes an act of thanksgiving. Paul’s message is clear: believers who are grounded in Christ’s peace, formed by Christ’s Word, and guided by Christ’s authority become people whose lives display continual gratitude. Thanksgiving, then, is not just something we offer—it is something we **become**.

### **Action Step**

This week, choose **one area of your daily life**—work, school, home, social interactions—and intentionally do it **in the name of Jesus**. Before beginning, pause and thank Him for the opportunity. Afterward, reflect:

- How did approaching this activity under His authority and for His glory affect your attitude?
- How did gratitude change the way you interacted or responded?

Keep a short journal or note to track how Christ-centered, thankful living shapes your everyday life.