

We Give Thanks To God

Colossians 1:3



Living Together In The Love Of God

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FOCAL Read Together Colossians 1:3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you ...

OPENING ILLUSTRATION John received a parrot as a gift - but to him it wasn't much of a gift. This bird had a bad attitude and an even worse vocabulary. Every word it uttered was rude, obnoxious and liberally laced with profanity. John tried and tried to change the bird's vocabulary. He sat for hours trying to teach it new and less "flammable" language. Nothing seemed to help. One day John came home from work and the parrot cursed. John lost his temper and yelled at the parrot - it in turn yelled back. John grabbed the parrot from the cage, it bit him, and John then tossed the parrot in the freezer. For a few minutes the parrot squawked and kicked and screamed. Then suddenly there was total quiet. Not a peep was heard for over a minute. Fearing that he'd hurt the parrot, John quickly opened the door to the freezer. The parrot calmly stepped out onto John's outstretched hand and said **"I believe I may have offended you with my rude language and actions. I'm sincerely sorry. It won't happen again - I promise."** John was stunned at the change in the bird's attitude. As he was about to ask the parrot what had made such a dramatic change in his behavior, the bird spoke-up, very softly, **"May I ask what the turkey did?"**

We are coming to a time of the year when we take a moment to gather together with family and friends to celebrate what we call "Thanksgiving". Sadly, many people have no idea as to what the holiday is about. People will gather around a table laden with food,

"gobble" down turkey and dressing, desserts and drinks, and at few of those tables will even one word of thanks be given to the Lord Who has so richly blessed us.

Of all the holidays we as Americans celebrate, Thanksgiving is one of the most Christian. Yes, I know that we celebrate Christmas and Easter every year, but most Christians know and acknowledge that December 25th is *not* the day that Jesus Christ was born to the Virgin Mary. You see, the Bible says that **the shepherds were in the fields watching their flocks by night (Luke 2:8-12)**, and shepherds only stayed in the fields in early March through October. We really do not know the *exact* dates of Christ's birth and death, but we celebrate the fact of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection on the holidays we call "Christmas" and "Easter". We really do, however, know the Christian origin of the holiday we call "Thanksgiving".

English Dissenters were Christians who separated from the state supported **Church of England**. These believers in the Lord Jesus Christ were against state interference in religion, having been persecuted by the English government and the English Church for many years. 102 English Dissenters who named themselves "Pilgrims" left England on a ship called "The Mayflower" in September of 1620. Once underway the Mayflower met with strong winds and storms. The main beam in the ship cracked, and at one point the Pilgrims considered turning back. One crew member and one passenger died on the voyage, and a child was born and was appropriately named "Oceanus". The Mayflower was anchored in **Provincetown Harbor**, where the Pilgrims disembarked.

Once they came ashore they drew up the **Mayflower Compact**, the first governing document of Plymouth Colony. The Compact says:

"In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, etc. Having undertaken, for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith and Honor of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the First Colony in the Northern Parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one of another, Covenant and Combine ourselves together into a Civil Body Politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod, the 11th of November, in the year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France and Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini 1620".

It is impossible to read the Mayflower Compact and not know that these first settlers of the United States were soundly Christians.

These believers, **carrying the Kingdom of God to a strange new land**, suffered terribly that first year. As I have mentioned before, **during the first winter in 1620, 46 of the 102 pilgrims died**. These believers suffered - but they persisted because they knew they were carrying the Kingdom of God to a new world. They did what they did for the glory of God.

The Pilgrims - our Christian forefathers - were people of vision. They moved forward, following God, trusting Him and His Gospel to change the world that was around them.

The Pilgrims probably didn't eat Turkey and Dressing at that first Thanksgiving meal. I know they didn't sit around after the meal watching football on television and taking a nap on the couch. One of the traditional dishes that the Pilgrims ate was called *eel pie*. Can you imagine that? YUK! The Pilgrims were thankful, just as every Christian should be thankful.

**- We should be thankful that
God has saved us by faith.**

**- We should be thankful because
God has bound us together in love.**

**- We should be thankful because
God is enlarging His Kingdom through us.**

**- We should be thankful because one day
God will receive us into the Kingdom of Heaven.**

1. I Am Thankful Because God Has Saved Me By Faith In Christ Jesus, And Has Bound Us Together In Love

FOCAL Colossians 1:3-4 We **give thanks** to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you ...

Every Christian is a missionary for the Lord. The Kingdom of God does not spread because one person does the job. The Kingdom of God cannot spread because Billy Graham or Adrian Rogers or John MacArthur or Church Swindoll or Charles Stanley are there. Now these are great men, just like the Apostle Paul was a great man. These are all great and mighty men of God. But they alone cannot spread the Kingdom of God. Your Pastor cannot alone spread the Kingdom of God.

How is the Kingdom of God spread? It is spread by *every believer* understanding that he or she is a missionary for the Lord - and then acting on that knowledge.

Word Study The Apostle says "**we give thanks to God**". This is the *Present Active Indicative* of the Greek (ευχαριστω pronounced: *yoo-khar-is-teh'-o*). This is the same word used in Scripture for "**saying a blessing over a meal**" (see **Matthew 15:36; 26:27; Mark 14:23**). This word is used when the Scripture says in

Luke 22:19 {Jesus} **took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.**

Paul says to the Colossians, "**I say a blessing to God every time I think of you.** Why would he say that? Look at your context:

FOCAL Colossians 1:4 ... Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus ...

ILLUSTRATE During World War 2 **Tokyo Rose** was the name given to about a dozen different English speaking broadcasters of *Japanese propaganda*. The purpose of the broadcasters was to demoralize American and Allied forces by exaggerating their losses and their failures, and to hopefully cause the opposition to quit the battle.

When a supposed Christian or a Christian Church does things - such as fighting, feuding, or foaming at the mouth - then people "**hear of that type of faith**". Like Tokyo Rose, such reports bring bad propaganda to the work of the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:20-21). When you let God operate through you, and you do the things of God - like love - then the word spreads. The Apostle Paul - along with the other early missionaries - were working hard to lead others to Christ. The Church at Colossae - though not perfect - was working hard with one another.

Paul was thankful because **he HEARD of their faith in Christ Jesus**. The believers at Colossae had *genuine, Christ endowed faith*. Because their faith was genuine

the "word that went out from Colossae" was that this was an assembly that practiced love one toward another. The Apostle said:

FOCAL Colossians 1:4 Since we heard ... of the love which ye have to all the saints.

Eternal God the Son came from Heaven to earth and clothed Himself in flesh. What He did in a little virgin called Mary He does *spiritually* in every believer. God came unto Mary to be born into this world. God comes unto His believers to be shown unto the world.

The Blood of Jesus Christ not only only cleansed you from all sin, it became the means whereby God could *indwell each and every one of you*. Christians – **love**. What did the Apostle John emphatically state?

1 John 4:7-8 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. {8} He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

The proof that you are a Christian is *not in your words, not in your doctrines, not in your denomination, not in your baptism, not in your deeds, not in your good works*. The proof that you are a Christian *is in your love - in the love you show to one another and to the strangers among us*.

ILLUSTRATION Anytime a Christian Preacher brings up 9/11 and the Islamic Attacks on the Twin Towers by

al-Qaeda an unbeliever will say "Well, Timothy McVeigh was a Christian, and he blew up a building in Oklahoma City that killed 168 people". Their point is - what's difference between Radical Muslims and Christians like McVeigh. **The difference is in the Founder of the faith.** When a Muslim blows up the Twin Towers in New York he is following the teaching of Muhammad, who wrote:

QURAN [The Immunity 9.29] **Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day ...**

QURAN [The Immunity 9.123] **O you who believe! fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardness; and know that Allah is with those who guard (against evil).**

QURAN [The Cow 2.191] **And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from whence they drove you out, and persecution is severer than slaughter, and do not fight with them at the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you in it, but if they do fight you, then slay them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers.**

The Founder of Islam, Muhammad, commands his followers to kill the enemy. What does the **Founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ our Lord**, say?

Matthew 5:43-44 **Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies,**

bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

A Muslim is a good follower of Islam when he "**kills the enemy of Allah**" but a Christian is a good follower of Christ when he "**loves the enemy of God**". If you are a born again follower of Christ you *must love others* so that **the world may hear of that love.**

The Apostle Paul thanked God because **he heard of the love which the Colossians had to all the saints.** The Christians at Colossae loved all Christians everywhere – and that makes sense! Not all Christians agree with one another: this is the reason we have so many different denominations in Christianity. God's Word has no error in it, but often we disagree and divide along interpretive lines. And yet no true believer will *ever* hate another true believer - or even the enemy. He cannot, because the God that indwells me as a believer indwells you as a believer.

When Christians love one another and display the love of Christ to even the undeserving, then the world hears of it. As others hear of our love, others are attracted to that Godly love - and the Kingdom of God grows.

Was Timothy McVeigh a Christian? I doubt it. But if he was, he surely wasn't following the Way of Christ.

You cannot blow up a building - or Church - and be a good Christian!

1 John 2:9-11 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. {10} He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. {11} But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

He that hates his brother is in darkness even until now. You may fake love for God, you may – like the magpie – quote what you hear others say – but in time death is revealed in those who are yet dead. Do you know what God says of the one who says “I am a Christian” but hates his brother? Read on:

1 John 4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

The answer is to the Apostle's question is *you cannot*. If you are a Christian, then your faith will not be like Muhammad, nor like McVeigh, but it will be filled with love like Christ.

The great preacher **C.H. Spurgeon** stated¹:

“We have a common hope, let us have a common

¹ In his sermon *The Hope Laid Up In Heaven* preached October 13, 1878, at Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington. Sermon #1438

affection: we are on our way to God, let us march in loving company; we are to be one in heaven, let us be one on earth. One is our Master and one is our service; one is our way and one is our end; let us be knit together as one man. We all of us expect to see our Well-beloved face to face, and to be like him; why should we not even now love all those in whom there is anything of Christ? Brethren, we are to live together for ever in heaven: it is a pity we should quarrel. We are for ever to be with Jesus Christ, partakers of the same joy, of the same glory, and of the same love; why should we be scant in our love to each other? On the way to Canaan we have to fight the same enemy, to publish the same testimony, to bear the same trials, and to fly to the same helper: therefore let us love one another.”

2. I Am Thankful Because I Work With God And Am Heading Toward A Great Destiny

FOCAL Colossians 1:5-6 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; 6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

ILLUSTRATE Two hunters got lost in the woods. The first hunter said, "Don't worry. All we have to do is shoot into the air three times, stay where we are, and someone will find us." So they shot in the air three times, but no one came. After a while, they tried it again; still no response. Finally the second hunter said, "I suppose we

can try again, but it better work this time. We're down to our last three arrows."

Genuine faith produces a genuine, fruit bearing hope. **Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us (Romans 5:5).**

Paul thanked God for the **hope that was laid up in Heaven** for these believers. Their hope was genuine, for it was a hope that **bringeth forth fruit**. Those who are Christians indeed are fruitful for the Lord. There are a number of people who *profess* to be Christians, but are not. How do you know a Christian when you see him? You know a Christian by his works. Paul warned his student Titus of the false Christian, who

Titus 1:16 profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Our Lord Jesus warned of the *corrupt tree that brought forth corrupt fruit*:

Matthew 7:15-20 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down,

and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Our hope as Christians should make us *visionary missionaries*. God saved us by faith in Christ Jesus - He can do the same for anyone we meet!

The Apostle wrote:

CONTEXT Colossians 1:12-13 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: {13} Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Think about these words, Beloved of God. **God has made us partakers - literally partners of the inheritance of Heaven.** We shall inherit Heaven and its glories along with King David, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, John the Baptist, Peter, and a multitude of others. We shall stand shoulder to shoulder with Adrian Rogers, Dwight L. Moody, Billy Graham, and a multitude of **saints in the light**.

We are - right now - **delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the Kingdom of God's Son Jesus. The Kingdom of God is within you.** Spread His Kingdom by telling others about Jesus.

Christians are not saved to be fruitless. We are saved so that we can **bring forth much fruit**. God has a

wonderful plan for us, both individually and collectively. We are Heaven bound. One day we shall all stand before the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul said:

2 Corinthians 5:9-11 Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

There is a judgment coming. There is a judgment for the Christian, where the One Who saved you will ask, **"What did you do to spread the Kingdom of God while you were on the earth? Did you hinder, or did you help? Did you work for Me, or for the *other side*?"** Your future reward will be determined by how you bore fruit for the Lord Jesus.

You were delivered from darkness to serve in the light. Are you serving in the light?

If you are a Christian, you have a wonderful destiny. If you are not a Christian, God beckons you to come to Christ and be saved.



FOCAL Read Together Colossians 1:3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you ...

1. I Am Thankful Because God Has Saved Me By Faith In Christ Jesus, And Has Bound *Us Together* In Love

Colossians 1:3-4; Luke 22:19; Colossians 1:4; Luke 17:20-21; Colossians 1:4; 1 John 4:7-8; Matthew 5:43-44; 1 John 2:9-11; 1 John 4:20

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2. I Am Thankful Because I Work With God And Am Heading Toward A Great Destiny

Colossians 1:5-6; Titus 1:16; Matthew 7:15-20; Colossians 1:12-13; 2 Corinthians 5:9-11

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