

October 29, 2006 by Steve Brandon



## Do All In the Name of the Lord Jesus

### Colossians 3:17

Many of you have been in the position at one point or another in your life that you have been out looking for a job. You have scoured the newspapers for opportunities. You have gone to places of employment and filled out applications. Perhaps in this day and age, you have gone online in quest for a job. Perhaps you have even been given job descriptions to see if you indeed qualify.

If you have ever looked closely at many job descriptions, you might notice at the very bottom of it a final sentence that reads, "Other duties as assigned." The reason why such a sentence exists in a job description is that it is practically impossible to fully explain in a page or two all of the duties that a potential employee may be called upon to do. Though one's primary job may be a checkout counter at Lowes, other duties might include sweeping the floor when a mess is made by a customer, or helping to carry items to a customer's car, or looking up a price in the aisle someplace. Though one's primary job may be a dental hygienist, other duties might include, shoveling snow on a day when it's really coming down, taking the garbage out to the dumpster, or filling in one day as a receptionist, when she is sick. "Other duties as assigned" is a phrase that is used to describe those miscellaneous duties that might simply be too numerous to attempt to catalog. Should an attempt be made to write down everything, surely something would come up that a potential employee might object to, saying, "That's not in my job description." Well, in a similar way, this morning, in our exposition of the book of Colossians, we have come to a similar phrase.

Since chapter 3 and verse 5, Paul has been giving those in Colossae many, many instructions in how to live as believers in Christ. He has been teaching them how a follower of Christ should walk in a manner "worthy of the calling with which you have been called" (Eph. 4:1). In verse 5, Paul told them to "consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed." In verse 8, Paul told them to put aside "anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive speech from your mouth." In verse 9, Paul said not to lie to one another. In verse 12-14, Paul told them to "put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness and love." In verse 15, he called them to peace. In verse 16, he told them to saturate their minds with the gospel of Christ and let it flow out in their relationships with others. And now, we come to our text this morning: verse 17. It's a sort of "other duties as assigned" type of verse. He says, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father" (Col. 3:17).

This fills in everything that Paul may not have covered in verses 5-16. Because, as you think about it a little bit, you begin to realize that there are many things that he didn't mention in this epistle, which he could have mentioned. He didn't mention anything about faithfulness or self-control (Gal. 5:22-23), which are both a portion of the fruit of the Spirit. He didn't address the issue of avoiding anger or bitterness (Eph. 4:26, 31), not stealing, but giving instead (Eph. 4:28), or silly talk or course jesting (Eph. 4:4), all of which he told to the Ephesians. Paul didn't mention anything about pride or envy or strife or hating God (Rom. 1:29-30), which he told to those in Rome. He missed a few of the Ten Commandments, which God gave to Moses. For instance, he made no mention of having no other gods (Eph. 20:3), using the name of the LORD in vain (Eph. 20:7), or staying away from murder or covetousness (Ex. 20:13, 17).

I'm sure that if you think for a bit longer, you can come up with many more exhortations that Paul didn't include in this list. But, verse 17 covers the entire gamut of proper Christian behavior. Everything that you do should be in the name of the Lord Jesus. It's amazing in how exhaustive this one verse it is. It includes everything you say. It includes everything you do. It includes everything that you do every second of every day that you live. There is nothing that you do that isn't included here in this verse.

If you would think about this for any amount of time at all, it's a bit overwhelming. It's talking about the things you say to your spouse. It's talking about the things you say to your parents. It's talking about the things you say to your teachers and coworkers and neighbor and fellow church members. This verse addresses the various range of activities that you do throughout the day. Paul is address your shower in the morning. He's talking about your breakfast. He's talking about reading the newspaper in the morning. He's talking about your drive to work.

He's talking about all the things you do at work, whether it's talking on the phone, machining a part, filling out paper work, setting up a client, organizing your desk, placing an order, delivering the mail, reading your mail, vacuuming a carpet, designing a part, taking part in a meeting, filling orders, managing a project, taking care of a patient, setting up audio/visual equipment, managing the assembly line, keeping your computers running, explaining an insurance policy, entering data into a computer, wiring a building, taking care of patients, programming a computer, planning for county road development, meeting with salesmen, or drafting plans. All of these things are to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus.

If you stay at home with the kids during the day, Paul is talking about, dressing the kids, feeding them breakfast, cleaning up from breakfast, teaching school, cleaning up after messes,. teaching how to do chores, managing free-time, monitoring television time and computer time, making lunch, cleaning up after lunch, changing diapers, driving to the soccer practice, picking up from school, or helping with homework.

This verses addresses everything that you need to do to live, like, washing your dishes, purchasing new clothes, repairing the leaky faucet, mowing the lawn, paying the bills, vacuuming the carpets, cleaning the floors, reading the mail, changing furnace filters, replacing light bulbs. He's talking about all of your recreational activities that you enjoy, like watching television, playing soccer, sewing, baking, playing golf, reading your email, going out to dinner and a movie, going to a ballgame, visiting with friends, playing bocce ball, playing piano, building your model cars, using your camera, camping, boating, fishing, hunting, reading your favorite writer, taking a walk, or going on a picnic.

When you finish your day and lie down to sleep, even that's included in Paul's statement. You should sleep in the name of the Lord Jesus. **The scope of verse 17 included everything that you say or do.** The life of a follower of Jesus Christ doesn't simply happen here at church. No, the life of a believer extends throughout all of your life. It extends to every waking moment of your life as well as the hours you spend sleeping upon your bed.

But, what does this mean practically? What does it mean to do something in the name of the Lord Jesus? Well, there are several aspects to this. First, I believe that it means that you should live your life in complete **submission** to His authority. This is the entire argument for the other commands given in Colossians 3. God has done a work in your life, transferring you from darkness into His kingdom, and raising you to be with Christ. He owns you. And you will willingly follow.

Doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus also means that you should do everything as if you were His **representative** here upon the earth. He is the one who has sent us into this world. As believers in Christ, we live as those who have been sent by Him. We are His ambassadors! Where we go and what we do is to be a reflection of our heavenly king. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; Nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 5:14-16). In other words, when people see the way we talk and live, they ought to see a reflection of God in us. It's not so much that they think that we are so good. It's that they think that our God is so great! They see what you do and "glorify your Father, who is in heaven."

Further, your life should be an **expression** of your love to Him in all things. We should live our lives consistent with the example that He left for us upon the earth. Our love for God is great. He is the one who chose us, made us holy. It is He who loved us. We respond with expressions of love to Him. In 1 John 4:19, we read, "We love because He first loved us." These instructions that Paul gives (in verses 5-16) all fall under the "love" category. All that we do should fall under the "love" category as well.

Most important of all, you should live in total **dependence** upon His power to do so. Left to ourselves, we are weak. We can't do all these things, unless the Lord so works in us. Again, I bring up to you a great picture of how our sanctification works. Colossians 1:29, "For this purpose also I labor, striving according to his power, which mightily works within me." Paul is working and laboring with all of his might. Night and day, he has his heart set upon the ministry. And yet, he fully realizes that it's ultimately not his own strength that's going to accomplish these things. It is the power of Christ which works within him "both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

Matthew Henry summarized what this means very well with these words in Colossians 3:17. In his commentary upon this passage, he said that we should do everything "according to his command and in compliance with his authority, by strength derived from him, with an eye to his glory, and depending upon his merit for the acceptance of what is good and the pardon of what is amiss" [\[1\]](#). It would do well for you to consider that quote again, as it is so complete and so right.

It's a pretty tall order. How do I do this practically? How do I live moment by moment seeking to live in submission to the Lord as His representative upon the earth, as an expression of my love to Him and in dependence upon Him? Let me give you one practical help. Give everything that you do the "**will God be pleased?**" test. You should be able to take everything that you do throughout the day and ask yourself, "was God pleased with what I just did?" Or, you might anticipate what you are going to do and ask, "Will God be pleased with what I am about to do?"

This is our ambition in life: we want to please Him. Not because we fear Him, but, because we love Him. "Therefore we have as our ambition whether at home or about, to be pleasing to Him" (2 Cor. 5:9). Your conscience will know well enough what sorts of things please the Lord and which sorts of things displease the Lord. And in all of the areas of Christian living that Paul has been silent, this test is sufficient to guide you in all things.

Let me show you what I mean by illustration. Recently, my wife was away during a portion of the afternoon. She left me and my children home without her. I was in my office doing some needed work, and the kids were inside with a list of things to do on their own. At one point, they asked me if they could play with the video camera. I told them that they couldn't do it, until they had finished all of their work. They said that they had finished all of their work. And so, I went over the list with them, making sure that they had indeed finished everything that was assigned to them. One of the items had to do with some school work that I was unfamiliar with. And so, I asked my son, "when mom comes home, will she be pleased with the work that you have done? Is it what she expected you to do?" He said, "Yes." And so, I let him go and play with the video camera, like he wanted to do. This is the same sort of question that you should learn to ask yourself, "Will God be pleased" of my actions here.

We now come to the last phrase in verse 17, "giving thanks through Him to God the Father." This phrase speaks of the attitude with which we should be doing all of these things. We should do these things with an attitude of thanksgiving. In my exposition of verses 15 and 16 last week, I had mentioned how I had skipped all of the references to being thankful. It's not that this isn't important. Rather, it's so important that I wanted to climax my message by pointing this out and pressing upon all of you the importance of giving thanks. Let's review verses 15-17 and look for thankfulness.

Colossians 3:15-17

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be **thankful**. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with **thankfulness** in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving **thanks** through Him to God the Father.

I want to spend the rest of my message considering this topic of thankfulness. I think that all of us have a basic understanding of what

thankfulness is. Thankfulness is an expression of your heart that shows others that you are aware of a benefit that you received. Being thankful means that you express with your words how grateful you are to have received something from someone. Children, you know what thankfulness is. Christmas is coming up. You will have an opportunity to open a present for you. What do your parents teach you to do immediately after you open up your present? You are to say to the one who gave it to you, "Thank you." All of us have expressed our thanks in one way or another throughout our lifetime.

As Paul sprinkles this thought throughout these three verses, it demonstrates exactly how important it is for us to be a thankful people. In fact, one of the things that characterize the unsaved is their ungratefulness. When Paul lists the sins of those who reject God, he lists their ungratefulness as one of their crowning sins. Romans 1:21 says, "Even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks." In refusing to acknowledge God and thank Him, God rejected them. Furthermore, in 2 Tim. 3:1-2, Paul lists off the sins that will characterize the last days, "Men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, ..." Ungratefulness is a chief sin of the unsaved.

I love the way that Richard Baxter explains those who are ungrateful. He calls them "devourers of mercy." <sup>[2]</sup> He considers them who consume the good, never seeking to respond in kind. It is one of the greatest evils. Because, ultimately, it refuses to acknowledge the kindness of God in sending His son to save us from our sin.

In **verse 15**, we see that our **thankfulness is connected to the peace** we ought to experience within the body. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful" (Col. 3:15). There is an amazing correlation between a thankful heart and the peace that flows from it. Have you ever had a difficult time in your life, and begun to reflect upon all the things you have to be thankful for? It is amazing how it gives you an entirely different perspective than ever before. The Biblical writers did this all the time.

Consider how Asaph evaluated life in Psalm 73. He looked on the wicked and saw their prosperity (Ps. 73:3). They body was fat and they had no pains in their death (Ps. 73:4). They are always at ease (Ps. 73:12). They had increased in wealth (Ps. 73:12). And yet, Asaph found himself "stricken all day long and chastened every morning" (Ps. 73:14). Such observations were causing Asaph to despair. But, when he saw their end, that the would be destroyed, it all came into focus for him (Ps. 73:17). He gave great praise to God, "Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Ps. 73:25-26). Though Asaph didn't use the word, "Thankful," nevertheless, such an attitude came through in his words.

Randy Alcorn observed that "We are never thankful for what we think we deserve. We are deeply thankful for what we know we don't deserve. When you know you deserve eternal hell, it puts a 'bad day' in perspective. If you realize you're undeserving, suddenly the world comes alive--you're surprised and grateful at God's many kindnesses that were invisible when you thought you deserved better. Instead of drowning in self-pity, you're floating on a sea of gratitude." <sup>[3]</sup> Seeing the heavenly reality will always give joy to the heart of the believer, which will express itself in thanks to God and will give an inner peace with God. Though the kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed" (Ps. 2:2), when we look to heaven, we see the Lord laughing at them, because, He is totally in control (Ps. 2:4). We can be at peace with God and express our thanks to Him.

What's true with God and your circumstances is also true with your relationships with other people. It's really hard to have a disagreement with a person who has expressed their thankfulness to God for you, isn't it? If someone comes up to you and expresses his thankfulness to God for the good qualities that he sees in you, or for the work that you did for someone, it's difficult to have a disagreement with them, isn't it. When someone expresses such appreciation, it does something in your heart toward that person. It endears you to them, because you realize that he is on your side. He is for you, not against you. Peace among the brethren will be the result.

This past week, my wife and I were going to bed. It was long after our children had gone to bed. As Yvonne crawled into her side of the bed, she felt something under her sheets which was a bit unusual. And so, she turned on the light and discovered this paper underneath her sheets. It was obviously a picture that had been drawn by a child. It had a landscape with a few trees. In the sky were a few stickers. One was of an F-14 fighter plane. The other was of the stealth bomber. Dropping out of the fighter jet was a man with a parachute. And then, there is this note, ... "Dear mom, Thank you SO much for taking Hanna, Carissa and I to the Rockford Air Fest. I loved it. Love SR." Should there have been any issue that day that would have caused us to be disappointed with SR, our son, for some reason or another, it didn't matter. That note of thanks changed everything.

In the church, it works the same way. Show me a church where her members are continually expressing their thanks to God for the various evidences of grace that they have identified in each other, and I'll show you a church that experiences great peace within her community.

**There is a big difference in being thankful and expressing your thankfulness.** That's why it's important to express your thanks to others. I know that I have been poor at this in the past. But, by God's grace, I want to change. I want to be a man who expresses his thankfulness to God for others. Do you remember the time when Jesus healed 10 lepers? The story is told in Luke 17.

Luke 17:11-19

While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they were going, they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine--where are they? Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well."

If you would have asked the nine leprous men, who didn't express their thankfulness to Jesus, "Are you thankful for what Jesus did?" I'm certain that every single one of them would have said, "Yes, I'm thankful." I'm sure that Jesus knew this. But, there is a difference between

being thankful and expressing your thanks. Oh, may God give us mercy to be those who express our thanks to one another.

In **verse 16**, we see **thankfulness connected with the worship** that takes place within the body. "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16). In all of our singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, we need to be doing so with an attitude of thankfulness in our hearts toward God. This isn't so surprising. The Psalms are filled with admonitions to give thanks to the Lord. Just consider a few of them with me.

Psalm 107:1, "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His lovingkindness is everlasting."

Psalm 108:3, "I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the peoples, and I will sing praises to You among the nations."

Psalm 111:1, "Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart."

Psalm 136:1, "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His lovingkindness is everlasting."

Psalm 138:1, "I will give You thanks with all my heart; I will sing praises to You before the gods."

I have given you five references here of the Psalmist giving thanks to the LORD in worship. In the Psalms, I counted up about 50 similar references. The Psalms are filled with admonitions to give thanks to the LORD. They are filled with those who wrote giving thanks to the LORD.

So filled are the Psalms with this idea, that I read a scholarly article one time talking about how the idea of giving thanks really wasn't in the Old Testament. Rather, according to this scholar, in all of these instances in which we translate it, "giving thanks," it should instead be "giving praise." <sup>[4]</sup> I think that he has an element of truth in this thing. But, the truth isn't so much that the giving of thanks isn't in the Psalms. Rather, the idea is that true thanksgiving is indeed offering up praise and worship to God, for His kindness to us. And when it comes down to it, isn't this why we worship the Lord? We worship Him, because He has been so good to us. His kindness to us is shown in greatest measure in our salvation. We respond to His saving us by thanking Him.

On other occasions, when thanksgiving was mentioned in Colossians, it had to do with the salvation that we have in Christ. The first example comes in chapter 1, verse 3, where Paul writes, "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel" (Col. 1:3-5). In other words, Paul gave thanks to the Lord for the salvation of those in Colossae, who had heard the gospel and had come to believe it! In effect, he was saying, "I'm thankful that God's saving arm has been extended to you."

The next example of thanksgiving in this epistle comes in verse 12 (of chapter 1). Paul is praying that they might be "strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For he rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:11-14). Paul, here is praying that those in Colossae would understand the greatness of their own salvation, that they might express their thankfulness to God. God had qualified them to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. God had rescued them from darkness. God had transferred them into the kingdom of Christ. God had redeemed them. God had granted them forgiveness.

These things are the essence of our salvation. We don't deserve heaven in any way. We were in bondage to sin, dwelling in darkness. But, God is the one who broke through our darkness and transferred us into His marvelous light. God has forgiven us our sin through the merits of Christ alone. This ought to give us great reason to worship God by giving Him thanks.

The next example of thanksgiving comes in chapter 2, verse 7. And again, we find it in the context of our salvation. Paul writes, "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude" (Col. 2:6-7). When you received Christ Jesus the Lord, you simply received Him by faith. So also, should you continue your life by faith in Him. In so doing, He will continue to work in your life by building you up and steadying your faith. As you do this, you ought to be "overflowing with gratitude." That's the same word that is often translated, "Thanksgiving."

I don't think that it's an accident that Paul's major focus of thanksgiving in this epistle centers around our salvation. Because it is there that we worship Him, which is the context of our giving of thanks in verse 16. In Lamentations 3:39, we read, "Why should any living mortal, or any man, offer complaint in view of his sins?" In light of the great gift of salvation that we have, there is absolutely no reason that we have to complain to God. Rather, we can only offer up our praise to God. This leads us nicely to considering the context of the exhortation to be thankful in verse 17.

In **verse 17**, we see that our giving of thanks is **connected to all of our life!** "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." Do you realize that the Bible commands you to be thankful! 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "In everything give thanks." This means that there is nothing that comes across our path, for which we have reason to be unthankful. Even when life is difficult, we are called to be thankful to the Lord.

The only way you can truly do this is if you have a proper understanding of the sovereignty of God. There is nothing that comes upon your life that doesn't come from the almighty hand of God. The promise of Romans 8:28 is that "God causes all things to work together for our good." It may not appear to be good at first. If things come into our lives that appear to be sour, we need to trust the Lord to use them for good. Trials may come in our lives to produce endurance in our faith and give us wisdom (James 1:2-5). A thorn in the flesh may come to keep us from boasting (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Discipline applied to us by our parents may not seem joyful for the moment, but afterwards, for those who have been trained by it, it will yield "the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11). In light of these things, we can be thankful for all these things.

In Isaiah 45:7, we read, "The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these things." The LORD brings the good as well as the bad. We need to thank Him for all the things in our lives, not just the good. Throughout the Bible, we have instances of God causing the bad so that it would work for the good. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, that he might later deliver His family from the famine (Gen. 37-50). Job lost his family and his health, that he might put on display what it means to trust in the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar had his reason taken from him, that he might come to understand the ways of God. Manasseh was brought into the dungeons of Babylon with hooks and chains, that he might be humbled. In all these instances, it may not appear to be a good thing at the moment, but every single one of these saints of old could later give great glory to God for His goodness to them. We need to learn to be thankful "for all things," even in the midst of our trials.

As William Cowper wrote, ...

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds ye so much dread,  
Are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head.  
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace;  
Behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face.

Oh, we may not understand at the moment why the particular difficulties are coming upon our lives. But, we may trust that the Lord is in control and that He knows what He is doing. God is great and God is good. It is precisely when things are very difficult for you and you still give thanks to the Lord, that the world takes notice. It's not too extraordinary for the world to be thankful when things go well with them. Have you ever heard a lottery winner complain to the press the day it is announced that they won the lottery? No! All are smiles and grins and happiness. Oh, but should a person face a difficulty in their life, it's then that their character will shine through.

Can you be thankful to the Lord when your house burns down? Can you be thankful when your brother dies? Should you find yourself dying of cancer, could you give thanks to the Lord for cancer? Can you be thankful when you lose your job? How about when you are experiencing financial trials? I'm not wishing any of these things to come upon you, but should the sovereign Lord bring them, will you be thankful for them, trusting that they will bring about good at some point?

It's at these times that the world will take notice of you and the greatness of your God, that you can have such faith as this. I love the story of the Moravians and **John Wesley**. They were on a ship together crossing the Atlantic, bound for America. Some great storms came upon the sea. John Wesley observed their faith. He wrote in his diary of the Sunday when the Moravians were in the middle of their worship service. He wrote,

In the midst of the Psalm wherewith their service began, the sea broke over, split the main-sail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The [Moravians] calmly sung on. I asked one of them afterwards, 'Was you not afraid?' He answered, 'I thank God, no.' I asked, 'But were not your women and children afraid?' He replied, mildly, 'No; our women and children are not afraid to die.'" [\[5\]](#)

Their faith became the catalyst for John Wesley to embrace the faith that he preached. Down through the ages, there have been many saints who have endured great difficulties, looking at their circumstances through the lens of thankfulness. In so doing, they have given great honor to the Lord, ... "doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus with thankfulness to God."

For instance, I think about **Amy Carmichael**. She was born with beautiful brown eyes. But, she didn't like her eyes. She wanted some nice Irish blue eyes. So, one night, she prayed that the Lord would change the color of her eyes. When morning broke, she jumped to her feet and ran to the mirror, but was disappointed that God hadn't answered her prayer. She was so dejected that her mother had to help her to calm down, understanding that a "no" from God was an answer to prayer every bit as much as a "yes" would have been. Amy wasn't happy. She wanted blue eyes. Only years later would she fully understand the reason why the Lord didn't give her blue eyes. She was on the mission field in India. At one point, she heard about some terrible things happening to girls in the temple. The only way that she could begin to stop these things was to get into the temple herself, as a temple girl. So, she dressed up like a little Indian girl. She put on a sari and stained her skin dark. With her brown eyes, she fit right in. If her eyes were blue, she never would have passed as Hindu worshiper. Nor would she have been able to minister to those in India without her beautiful brown eyes. Ultimately, Amy Carmichael was very thankful for her brown eyes.

Or, how about the story of **Fanny Crosby**? When she was six weeks old, a doctor made a mistake in the medicine to give her. As a result, she became blind in both eyes. One could think that such things would have caused her to be bitter. On the contrary, Fanny Crosby came to embrace her blindness, enough to write,

Oh what a happy soul I am, Although I cannot see;  
I am resolved that in this world Contented I will be.  
How many blessings I enjoy, That other people don't;  
To weep and sigh because I'm blind, I cannot, and I won't.

She would later say, "It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me." She put it all in perspective when she said, "when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior!" Now, there is a thankful person, who is thankful for all things.

Have you heard about **Matthew Henry**? On his way to speak at a Christian gathering, he was robbed of all his money. When he arrived at the gathering, he preached his message. Upon returning home, he wrote in his diary, "Let me be thankful that I was robbed tonight. Let me be thankful first because I was never robbed before. Second, because, although they took my purse, they did not take my life. Third, because, although they took my all, it was not much. And, fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed another."

Many other examples like these could be given. But, it's sufficient to show how it is possible, even in the most difficult of circumstances to give thanks to the Lord. God has commanded us to be thankful. As a result, we aren't to be those who dwell on the negative things. Rather, we are to look at life through the lenses of thankful glasses. Admittedly, there are times when it might require of us a bit of work mentally to figure it out exactly how it is that we should be thankful. Here are some helpful suggestions.

If your clothes are fitting a bit too snug, be thankful, ...  
... because it means you have enough to eat.  
If you find yourself cleaning up the mess after a party, be thankful, ...  
... because it means you have been surrounded by friends.  
If you find yourself grumbling at the taxes you pay, be thankful, ...  
... because it means you're employed.  
If you find yourself in despair over your heating bill, be thankful, ...  
... because it means that you have a home.  
If you are overwhelmed with your household projects: mowing the law and fixing your windows, be thankful, ...  
... because it means you have a home.  
If you are tired of doing the laundry, be thankful, ...  
... because it means you have clothes to wear.  
If you begin to complain because the only parking space you could find was at the far end of the parking lot, be thankful, ...  
... because it means you can walk.  
If you cringe when you listen to the lady who sings off-key behind you in church, be thankful, ...  
... because it means that you can hear.  
If you are tired of people complaining about the government, be thankful, ...  
... because it means that you have freedom of speech.  
If you hate it when the alarm that goes off in the early morning hours, be thankful, ...  
... because it means you're alive. [\[6\]](#)

This is the only way that we will do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 29, 2006 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] Matthew Henry's Commentary, Volume 6, p. 616.

[2] Richard Baxter, A Christian Directory, p. 142.

[3] Randy Alcorn, The Grace and Truth Paradox, p. 84.

[4] I'm referring to Claus Westermann's dissertation, which has been published in book form: The Praise of God in the Psalms. I haven't read this, but have only read quotes pertaining to this Hebrew word, often rendered "thanks." You can find a few paragraphs of his work in The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, volume 1, p. 365.

[5] Christian History, Issue 1, p. 28.

[6] Source unknown. But something like this is all over the internet.