

November 19, 2023 by Steve Brandon



Give Thanks

Colossians 3:17

1. In all you do
2. In the name of Jesus
3. Through Jesus

In four days, our country will celebrate Thanksgiving. This holiday means different things to different people. To others, it means family and friends. To some, it means turkey and football. To others, it means loneliness and depression. In all of these thoughts, one common theme will permeate everything: some semblance of giving thanks. And so, this morning, I would like for us to focus our attention upon a passage of Scripture that will fuel our giving of thanks. The verse that I want for us to look at is Colossians 3:17.

My aim this morning is simple. I want for you to leave this place this morning with an overwhelming sense of how thankful you ought to be for Christ Jesus. Let's read our verse.

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. Here is my first point this morning,

Give thanks,

1. In all you do

I trust that one of the first things that you noticed about this verse when I read it was how exhaustive this verse is. It begins by setting the scope of application of the principle put forth, "Whatever you do in word or deed." It deals with every aspect of your life! There is nothing in our lives that escape the boundaries set forth in Colossians 3:17. You simply cannot get outside, "whatever you do in word or deed."

We live here upon this earth. To escape the gravitational pull of the earth, you need to send a rocket in the air at 25,000 miles per hour, which is called "escape velocity." This is really fast. This is seven miles per second. To escape the earth is possible, but, it is very, very difficult. But, you cannot escape this verse, Whether you are eating your breakfast, Whether you are driving to work, Whether you are golfing on a golf course, Whether you are sewing a dress on your sewing machine, Whether you are talking to a friend on a the phone, or Whether you are attending a church service this verse is to be applied in how exactly you go about doing these things.

You need to do it all with thanks. Paul says that you need to "do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." This is more than a one day holiday pronounced by the government. This is every day, and all the time.

The Bible is full of expressions of thanks. Over and over again, the writers of the Psalms say things like,

"I will give thanks to the LORD" (Psalm 7:17).

"I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart" (Psalm 9:1).

"I will give You thanks forever" (Psalm 52:9).

"I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with my whole heart" (Psalm 86:12).

Over and over again, the writers of Scripture command us to give thanks to the Lord.

"Give thanks to His holy name" (Psalm 30:4).

"Give thanks to the LORD for He is good" (Psalm 107:1; 118:1).

"Give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever" (Psalm 136:2).

"Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever" (Psalm 136:3).

And we are told, that "It is good to give thanks to the LORD" (Psalm 92:1).

These verses should press upon you the necessity of being thankful. But, perhaps you have never before seen how dominate a theme this ought to be in your life. "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" (Colossians 3:17). As a child of God, one thing that ought to characterize you above all others is that you are eminently a thankful person. Additionally, your thankfulness is demonstrated in everything that you do.

Are you a thankful person? Do you find yourself often thanking God for the things that He has done for you and given to you? Do you find yourself thanking God for the things that others do for you? Do you express your thanks to others? You aren't a thankful person, if you never express your thanks.

These questions are important. One of the characteristics of those who hate God is that they are unthankful. We read in the first chapter of Romans of those upon whom God's wrath is focused, "For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him" (Romans 1:20-21). The things that they have received from the hand of God have been received gladly, without any expression of gratitude to the One who gave it. God is angry with such people (Romans 1:18).

A characteristic of those who love God is that they are thankful. Paul puts forth a great example of his own thankfulness in this epistle to the Colossians. Right at the beginning of this epistle, Paul expresses his thanks to God. Immediately after his introductory comments, Paul begins in with expressing his thanks to God.

Colossians 1:3-4

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,

Here is Paul, expressing his own thankfulness to God for the salvation of these Colossian believers. They had believe in Christ Jesus and had expressed their faith in their love for all the saints. Paul didn't shy away from expressing such thanks. In many other epistles, he did the exact same thing. See Romans 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Philipians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 4.

The heart of Paul is my heart as well. I constantly give thanks to God for your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all the saints. So I want to give public thanks to all of you as well.

Derek, I am super thankful for you. You are one of the happiest men I have ever known. And you bring out the best in Hanna. I'm thankful for the Ramazzinas. You came from California and they simply said, "We are coming to Rock Valley Bible Church." You came and plugged yourself into the life of the church in many ways. Debra, you have come to be a grandmother to your children here in Illinois. I'm thankful for that. I'm thankful for the Iversens, the longest standing members of Rock Valley Bible Church (along with Rich and the Miltons). You have been faithful to encourage us for many, many years. I'm thankful for the Mulders, especially Brian's wisdom on the elder board. I'm thankful for the Smiths. You have come from some painful circumstances, but have come in using your gifts in the audio/visual need of our church. You have done so in a very gracious way. I'm thankful for Bob and Becky and Briana who visiting today. I just met them a few moments ago. They told me of how we bought a table from them (from Facebook) a few years ago. I'm thankful for the table! I'm thankful for Jake and Heather. Both of you have been a great blessing to me. I have been greatly encouraged by Jake coming to Christ a few years ago and growing in the Lord. I have been blessed by Heather's dealing with breast cancer with grace. I'm thankful for Faith, who I have known a long time. You came to our Kid's KLUB program in the neighborhood for years. It's encouraging for me to see you pursuing the faith in college. I'm thankful for the Brooks, who have decided to come and live in Illinois to be with your daughter. I love your sweet southern spirit. I'm thankful for Rahvy and Brooke. It has been great to know you from afar as you have traveled to come and be with us. I'm thankful for Rahvy's heart to preach. I'm thankful for how I "experience" Virginia, as one of her long-time friends once told me, "You don't know Virginia, you experience Virginia." I'm thankful for the Helds, who attended our church online for a year and a half before you ever came to church, even giving to the church without ever being here. I'm thankful for our past family connections. You were a youth pastor where my nephews went to church. I'm thankful for Vicki. We have known each other for a long time (though not at this church). You are struggling now with an illness and proving yourself faithful through it. I'm thankful for Matthew (who I haven't yet got to know very well). I'm thankful for what I have heard about your life recently from Ben, a childhood friend of yours. I'm thankful for Florenda, our neighbor, who is trying to pursue Christ among all of your difficulties and trials. I'm thankful for David, my son, who is growing up to be a faithful, hardworking man.

I'm thankful for Adam, who I knew before you were a Christian. You have been a joy to my life, along with Amy, who grew up at Rock Valley Bible Church. I'm thankful for the Curingtons, who made the choice to move to Rockford from California to make a new life. You are anticipating a new child in December to add to your growing family. I'm thankful for the Soderlings, though I barely know you. I'm glad that you have come to join us. I'm thankful for Istvan, who came to Christ less than a year ago. Your smile and dedication to God's word has been the joy of my life. I'm thankful for Ulf, and how we think alike, certainly because of our computer background. I'm thankful for Amanda, and your role as the new church administrator of our church. Your presence is being felt. I'm thankful for Armin's faithful service as a police officer. I'm thankful for the Pattons who are visiting us today from Louisville. You were married 11 years ago. I was privileged to officiate at your wedding. I'm thankful that we have a bed and breakfast in Louisville. I'm thankful for the way that Gary and Nancy serve us all. Gary approached me many years ago about mowing the church lawn. He said, "I want to mow the lawn here at the church so as to free up all of the dads at church." So he has faithfully mowed the grass for years. I'm thankful for year heart for missions, serving on the mission field and being a board member of FARMS International. I'm thankful for the Soderstroms. I haven't known you for long, but I'm thankful for your sweet spirit. I'm thankful for Paul and Lisa. You have only recently begun to come to Rock Valley Bible Church. I'm thankful for your openness and honesty. You are very real people. I'm thankful for Adrien. You had heart surgery this past week and yet, you are still her. I'm thankful for the years that we served together with Kid's KLUB here at the church. I'm thankful for Betty, who has lived with joy through a difficult, difficult life. I'm thankful for the joy that God has given your life. I'm thankful for Bonnie, who has known Christ for years. When your husband was failing, you came here to be in the midst of a bunch of young people. Further, I know that as you are reading through the Scriptures and meeting with my wife each week, you are very much an encouragement to her. I'm thankful for Rich. We have known each other a long time. You have faced some hard times as well. I'm thankful for how you have clung tightly to Jesus through these times, with a gentle spirit. I'm thankful for the Browns and your voracious appetite for knowledge. You read more than anybody that I know. We loved having your children in our home. They are such a delight. I'm thankful for Darryn. I'm thankful for your love of people. Darryn, you are the most tender of all of us elders. Maggie, you have pursued a counseling career, where you are put in situations where you need to love and care for others. I'm thankful for the Wriedts. You have been the stellar example of one who doesn't ministry in word, but does so in deed. The way that you minister to people in their physical needs is amazing. I'm thankful for your faithfulness to our church for a long, long time. In fact, you moved to be near us because you knew that we needed help. You have been God's hand to help build this church in many, many ways.

This is similar to Paul's heart of thanks for the churches, especially and particularly this morning, the church in Colossae. Within the book of Colossians, we are told in several other places in this epistle how to express our thanks.

Giving thanks should be expressed,

1. In the community of believers (Col. 3:15).

In chapter 3, Paul is speaking about how Christians ought to live. Verses 12-15 give a good summary.

Colossians 3:12-15

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

All of these actions are social actions. They all pertain to how you deal with one another. They address how to respond to those who sin against you. They speak of how to be united together: through love. Then, this section closes with a simple admonition. "And be thankful." Thankfulness should be communicated in the community of believers.

Giving thanks should be expressed,

2. In our worship (Col. 3:16).

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

In our Sunday songs of praise, they should be varied. We should sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. The overriding attitude of our singing should be this: "with thankfulness."

Giving thanks should be expressed,

3. In our prayers (Col. 4:2).

Colossians 4:2

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving

Whenever you are praying (and it should be often), thankfulness ought to be sprinkled throughout your prayers. Your whole attitude and demeanor of approach toward God ought to be thanks-saturated. You lay your head upon your pillow at night and offer up a quick prayer to God, it should be filled with thanks. You gather in your family for family worship and pray. It should be filled with thanks. You come to prayer meeting at church to pray. Your prayers should be filled with thanks to God.

Whether you find yourself among the community of believers, in a worship service singing praise to God, or praying, the giving of thanks ought to saturate your life. Giving thanks should be in all that you do. This is what Colossians 3:17 says. "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."

Give thanks,

2. In the name of Jesus

I trust that you can see it there in verse 17.

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.

This means that our life and our actions ought to be consistent with and driven by Jesus Christ. I believe that this is what Paul is driving at when he says, "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Christians live their lives based upon a person, not upon rules and regulations. We don't live by ideas or philosophies. We live our lives based upon a person, Jesus Christ.

This is the thrust of the book of Colossians. When Paul wrote Colossians, he was fully aware of the false teaching that was taking place in the city. It was a hodge-podge of different ideas. There were elements of Gnosticism, which taught a mystical, experiential knowledge of God that only some could attain to. There were elements of Judaism, which taught that you needed to keep the law, with all of its feasts and festivals. There were elements of asceticism, which taught that you needed to deprive your body of earthly pleasures like food if you would be really spiritual. There were elements of And the sad thing is that all of these teachers put themselves forth as "Christian" teachers.

In simple terms, the Gnostics placed importance upon what you know. The Judaizers placed importance upon what you do. The ascetics placed importance upon what you didn't do. To all of these things, Paul said, in every instance, the truth is bound up in a person! It's not what you know (i.e. Gnosticism) that governs you. It's not what you do (i.e. Judaism) that governs you. It's not what you don't do (i.e. asceticism) that governs you. It is fundamentally what you believe about Jesus that governs you.

1. To combat the Gnostics (who placed importance on an exclusive, experiential knowledge, which only a few can have), Paul writes at the beginning of Colossians 2.

Colossians 2:1

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face.

In this verse, Paul says that he is in a struggle for those at Colossae. for those at Laodicea (who are probably experiencing the same sorts of false teaching, as the city was only 10 miles away. The false teachers could easily have traveled from one to the other). for all who haven't seen my face. His struggle isn't only for a few who are "in the know" as the Gnostics would have you believe. Rather, Paul is struggling for all who are in the churches. He is struggling in order that,

Colossians 2:2-3

their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Paul wanted their hearts to be united in love and understanding when you understand and know Jesus Christ, Himself. Paul is saying that this knowledge is available to all! It's not for a select few. It's not for those who have somehow attained to this experience of God. It's for those who place their faith in Jesus Christ. In verses 4-5, Paul gives us a reason why he wrote these words.

Colossians 2:4-5

I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Paul told them to stay away from those Gnostics who would teach a special knowledge of God. Rather, he said, cling to Jesus Christ by faith. He ultimately warned them in verse 8.

Colossians 2:8

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

It's not philosophy and knowledge that we follow. It's Christ Jesus!

2. To combat the Judaistic heresy (who placed a strong emphasis upon keeping the law), Paul gives a similar argument. He is always pointing the Colossians back to Jesus. Paul told them the following.

Colossians 2:16-17

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

All of that stuff in the Old Testament, the dietary laws, (what you were to eat and drink), the feasts and festivals, (like the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Yom Kippur and the Passover), and the Sabbath observances. All of these things are like a shadow of what's coming.

A shadow isn't the substance. A shadow is fleeting and temporary. As soon as the light casting the shadow dims, the shadow is gone. But, the substance is independent of the light. It will remain whether the light is there or not. A shadow is only two dimensional. And certainly, there is a resemblance of the original substance. But, the substance is three dimensional. It is the very thing.

And who's the substance? It is Jesus Christ. The dietary laws, the festivals and the Sabbaths all anticipated His coming. Now that we see Jesus, we no longer have need to focus our attention upon the laws. We focus our attention upon Jesus.

3. To combat the ascetics (who placed emphasis upon avoiding bad things of the world), Paul uses the same argument: It's not the things you do that make you holy. It is dying with Christ that makes you holy. The ascetics placed importance on avoidance.

Colossians 2:20-23

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

Paul points out how avoiding these things might have "an appearance of wisdom", but ultimately they are useless. It's not cutting yourself with a knife that makes you spiritual. It's not depriving your stomach of food for days that makes you spiritual. It's dying with Christ. It's setting your mind on the things above, not the things on the earth that makes you spiritual. That's what will make lasting change.

This is what it means to do all "in the name of Jesus."

There is a way in which we get this concept exactly right in the church. I read of the story of an Australian Sunday School teacher,

who felt that her approach to teaching was in need of some remedial action. She thought she was altogether too predictable and the children were becoming bored with her story-telling and questioning of the class about what they had learned. She decided on a new tack to try to rectify matters. The next Sunday, once the preliminaries were over, she stood before the class of five-year-olds and asked, "Who can tell me what is gray and furry and lives in a eucalyptus tree?"

The children were completely taken by surprise by this totally unexpected and new approach. They thought there must be a catch and stared blankly at the teacher. "Come on," she coaxed, "someone must know. What is gray, furry, lives in a eucalyptus tree, has a black leathery nose and beady eyes?"

Still no answer. "Oh, surely you know. It lives in a eucalyptus tree; eats eucalyptus leaves; it has big beady eyes and furry

ears."

Silence. She was about to switch tactics and to go on to something else when a small girl gradually raised her hand in the air with much hesitation. Delighted, the teacher asked, "Yes, Suzie?"

The child replied, "I know it's Jesus, but it sounds like a Koala!"^[1]

There is a tendency about that which is very correct about that answer. Jesus is so much our topic, that even the children pick up on how you can answer "Jesus" to any question and have a fighting chance that you will be correct! Jesus is the answer to every question. Jesus is the answer to every difficulty. Jesus is the solution to every problem.

This is what Paul was saying, It's not mystical knowledge, It's Jesus. It's not Jewish laws, It's Jesus. It's not severe treatment of the body, It's Jesus.

In many ways, we can get it wrong, by focusing on too many other peripheral things. We can focus upon what we know. We can focus upon the doctrines we teach. We can focus upon what we do. We can focus upon ministry methods. We can focus upon style of music. We can focus upon the leadership structure of our church. We can focus upon our efforts at pursuing purity.

It's not that these things are bad (in and of themselves). In fact, they are very important. What's bad is when they become the main thing and receive the main focus. Because, Jesus is the main thing. Every other issue in the church and in our lives should be governed by Jesus Christ, and this includes our thanksgiving.

Give thanks,

3. Through Jesus

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**.

When we get to God, the Father, we get there through Jesus Christ. "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus is our high priest. When we pray, he represents us before the Father.

There are two reasons why we go through Jesus to the Father: (1) Because of who Jesus is; and (2) Because of what Jesus did.

1. Because of who Jesus is.

I believe that there is no better place in all of the Bible to see who Jesus Christ is than in the first chapter of Colossians.

Colossians 1:15-18

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

This passage places all of creation in perspective. It speaks of the Creator. It speaks of the Creator's role in the creating. It speaks of the Creator's purpose of the creation. It speaks of the Creator's role in sustaining the creation. Then, it moves wondrously to the church. It speaks of the role of Jesus Christ in the church. It speaks of the role of Jesus in redemption. It speaks of Jesus Christ and his glorification. Let's take a few moments and pick these verses apart.

Colossians 1:15

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

If you chase down the pronouns, you will easily discover that this is talking about Jesus. Jesus "is the image of the invisible God," which means that he is God. Jesus wasn't "made in the image of God" as we are. Jesus was the image of God, himself. And yet, He came into the creation.

The next phrase says that Jesus was "the first-born" of all creation. This phrase doesn't mean that Jesus was the first thing created, as the Jehovah's Witnesses would have us to believe. It means that of everything in the created order, Jesus was the supreme One.

Verse 16 speaks about how everything was created by him. Again, if you trace down the pronouns, this is Jesus. Jesus is the creator of the world. Next time you read in your Bible, Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," You might just as easily read it, Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning, Jesus created the heavens and the earth."

But, it's not merely the heaven and the earth that he created. Verse 16 tells us that

Colossians 1:16

by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

The created realm goes far beyond what you can see and touch and hear and taste. There is another realm of this creation, which includes all of the angelic beings. We don't know how many angels Jesus created. But, when you read the Biblical account, you get the sense that

there are a vast number of them.

In Revelation 5, we read of the angels worshiping the Lord around the throne of God. John simply writes that they were "numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands" (Revelation 5:11). When you start to do the math on this, it is incredible. Thousands of thousands is several million. Myriads of myriads is greater still. Some say that a myriad is 10,000. We are talking hundreds of millions (perhaps even billions) of angels worshiping around the throne.

If you think that the size of our creation is big, there is another realm of existence, of which we know so very little that very well may dwarf what we can see. And those angels around the throne are all worshiping Jesus. In Revelation 5:12, we read that they were saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (Revelation 5:12), I hope that this gives you a sense of how great Jesus is. When you think of Jesus, you might think of him as a man that walked upon the earth. Certainly, he was a man. But, when he walked upon the earth, the mere taking of a body was an expression of his immense humility.

When the layers are peeled back, and you see Jesus for who He really is, you see that Jesus created the universe and is worthy of all glory and honor and praise. In fact, this is the sense of the last two words of Colossians 1:16, "all things have been created through him and for him." Jesus is the creator. We are the created. He created us for a purpose. He created us for himself. He was the carpenter, building his own house. He was the furniture maker, building his own chair. He was the artist, painting a canvas for his own house. He was the mechanic, putting together his own car.

We have been created for Jesus.

This is why it is so disgraceful for any of the creation to reject Jesus. We were created for Him. When we pursue other things, rather than the great reason we were created, it mocks our creator. This passage in Colossians 1 goes on and on and on and on about who Jesus is.

Colossians 1:17

He is before all things and in him all things hold together.

"He is before all things." This simply refers to Jesus existing before time began. "In him all things hold together." Have you ever wondered how it is that our planet doesn't break up? Have you ever wondered how our ecosystem maintains its balance? It's because Jesus controls gravity. It's because Jesus holds life in place. When Paul preached to the Athenians, he said it this way, "in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

Colossians 1:18

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Jesus not only rules over all of creation. Jesus also rules over the church. Lest you think that Rock Valley Bible Church is simply another club that likes to get together and have fun, I'm here to tell you otherwise. We are an organization that Jesus has built by willingly dying upon a cross and raising again from the dead, granting forgiveness to those who believe.

Jesus ought to receive the chief honor in all of our lives. Jesus ought to be the chief thought in all of our thoughts. Jesus ought to be the best song that we sing. Jesus ought to be the greatest joy that we have. It brings us all back to our verse, 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."

We give thanks through Jesus,

2. Because of what Jesus did.

Thanksgiving is an interesting thing. It is always directed toward the past. It is always directed toward the kindness of another for you. It always comes about because you feel undeserving of what you have received. It always comes when you receive something that you really want.

This is the case in the cross of our Lord Jesus. What Jesus did for us on the cross took place in the past. Some 2,000 years ago to be exact. What Jesus did for us on the cross was an expression of unbelievable kindness to us. Certainly, it was all undeserved. And as we live our lives and see our failures more and more clearly, the cross becomes more and more precious to us. We really want it!

If you ever get to the point where the cross of Christ becomes common place, you will be unthankful. We have a need to continually be amazed at what took place at the cross.

Let's pull some verses from Colossians that demonstrate what a great work that Jesus did for us.

Colossians 2:13-14

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

The picture that Paul paints for us is pretty grim in verse 13, "you ... were dead in your trespasses." It means that we were unresponsive to spiritual truth. It means that we loved our sin. It means that we willfully indulged the desires of the flesh. And yet, the good news comes in the next phrase, "God made [you] alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses."

This is the picture of salvation that the Bible gives us. We were dead and helpless, until God made us alive in Christ. God gives life. He has

forgiven us our transgressions! He abolished our sins. The sins that we had committed were wiped clean through the blood of the cross. This is unbelievably good news. If you could only see clearly how great an offense your sin is before God, you would have no problem giving thanks to the Lord for what He has done in your life.

Further, God abolished our debt. The law of God acts as our accuser. Every sin that we ever commit is recorded in heaven. As we live, the accumulation of this debt grows and grows and grows. If you take the name of the Lord your God in vain, it is marked down in heaven. If you lust after another man or woman, it is marked down in heaven. If you deceive another person with your words, it is marked down in heaven. According to God's law, there are all of these decrees, which are hostile to us. Every time you violate them, there is a tick-mark placed right beside the transgression, which indicates a debt that you owe to God. The debt that you owe to God for your sins is monstrous and huge. You have no hope of every paying it! It is larger than any credit card debt that you ever imagined.

But, God has wiped them away. He has erased all of the tic marks against us! They no longer accuse us. How did God do this? He did it at the cross. He nailed our debt to the cross. "[he canceled] the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14).

Perhaps you remember when Jesus was crucified, Pilate had a sign made up the described the crime for which Jesus died. He was "King of the Jews" (Matt. 27:37). This was the custom of the day. The crime committed was nailed above the cross. One might say, "murderer" or "thief" or "adulterer." Thus, when you saw a victim hanging on a cross, you could simply read the offense for which the man was dying.

Now, picture this. It is beautiful! Though Jesus was put to death for being the "King of the Jews," God nailed another sign to the top of the cross. He nailed a sign including and detailing all of the sins of those who would believe on Jesus. Your sin and mine was nailed to the cross of Christ. It was there that he suffered for our sins. It was there that the Lord Jesus "became sin" so that we might "become righteous" (2 Cor. 5:21). And thus, the debt that we owed to the transgressions of the law which we have committed have been abolished! They have been taken out of the way! They have been removed.

And now I ask you, was this not an act of incredible kindness? Such an act deserves our genuine expressions of thankfulness to God.

I've heard it said that when you consider your sin before God, it's not as bad as you think it is, it's far worse. And when you consider the forgiveness that we possess in Christ, it's not as good as you think it is, it's far better. May we all give thanks to him this Thanksgiving!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 18, 2023 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] Graeme Goldsworthy, Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000, xi.