

## How is Your Thanksgiving Expressed?

Thanksgiving is often thought of as a specific time of national thanksgiving, as has been the custom here in the United States for decades. (Interesting note: Thanksgiving Day used to be on the last Thursday in November, but during the Great Depression, retailers prevailed upon the then President to make it the fourth Thursday in order to lengthen the Christmas shopping season. Occasionally, like this year of 2023 there is a fifth Thursday in November, and there are only three weeks of shopping before Christmas.)

We associate Thanksgiving then with family time, a big feast, Detroit Lions football, and other various shenanigans. When I was growing up, our Thanksgiving dinner was on Saturday, as Thursday was still deer season in West Virginia, and many in our family would be hunting that day on our farm and property there. We also did some visiting with West Virginia family on that Thursday.

The New Testament knows nothing of a common cultural thanksgiving. However, we are told to be thankful in a number of places, and of course, the Lord Jesus Christ taught us to be thankful as well in Luke 17. One passage to consider is Colossians 3:12-17, where the Apostle Paul, in words similar to Ephesians 4 in reference to putting off the old unconverted man and putting on the new transformed man, encourages Christians to be thankful.

**Thanksgiving is an expression of the fruit of the Holy Spirit** (Colossians 3:12). Christ is transforming us into His own image, and so we reflect Him more in all ways. As we grow in Christian maturity, the aspects of the fruit of the Holy Spirit are more evident in our lives. Aren't you thankful that you aren't the person you used to be before Christ met you? And aren't you thankful that you're more mature in Christ than you were when He did meet you?

**Thanksgiving is a demonstration of the forgiveness we have received** from the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:13), and of the forgiveness we freely give and receive from fellow believers. Jesus told us that we are forgiven as we forgive others (that is, we are able to freely *receive God's forgiveness* in the same way that we *freely forgive others*).

**Thanksgiving is our reflection of love** (Colossians 3:14). In the New Testament, love is not a feeling or sentiment; it is a concrete demonstration of choice and selflessness. We thank God for His

demonstration of love and mercy in the Cross, and the grace freely given for our salvation. We are also thankful that He has made us then to love others, and to receive love.

**Thanksgiving is a representation of the peace** we experience in the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:15). "The peace He gives when the heart believes, is indeed a sweet and glad surprise," (Elisha Hoffman, "Precious Is The Blood," #691 in the *1901 Brethren Hymnal*). God has made peace with us in Christ, and then we can have peace with ourselves, our past, and others. That is something to be thankful for in a world of turmoil!

**Thanksgiving is drawn out of us by our study of Scripture** (Colossians 3:16). As we engage the Eternal Word through the Written Word, we develop the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5-11), and we are amazed at the rich depths that truly are inexhaustible! There are no shortages nor environmental concerns when mining God's Word. We receive and study that Word with thanks to God!

**Thanksgiving is expressed through singing the Scripture, songs of praise, and Gospel songs** (Colossians 3:16). A thankful converted person is a singing person, and the Church has been a singing body since the time of Jesus. Even though we may not have the best voice, we do not find that as a requirement; being born again is the only prerequisite to sing to the glory of God. Paul notes that we are singing with grace *to the Lord*.

**Thanksgiving is articulated in our entire lives** (Colossians 3:17). "Whatever you do, in word or deed" is done to the glory of God and through thanksgiving. Whether awaking in the morning to the gift of a new day; enjoying a simple meal of coffee soup or an elaborate feast of turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie with whipped cream; rejoicing in salvation in Christ; sharing encouragement with a neighbor; changing oil in the car; mowing the lawn; or worshipping with the saints each Lord's Day, [we are doing it all in Christ, and hence our lives are living thanksgivings to God.]

Enjoy your Thanksgiving Day! And remember that for the Christian, each day and moment is a Thanksgiving event!

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