

A Life of Gratitude

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to be looking at Colossians chapter 3, verses 15 to 17. And if you have your Bibles, if you could turn there to that text.

And if you don't have Bibles, there's some Bibles up there that you can take as a gift from us for free. But just as a bit of an introduction to the text, it's not really so much an introduction as a request that you would give me a bit of help over the next couple of weeks.

Those of you who have Bibles and you look at 3, verses 15 to 17, you'll see that right underneath that, verse 18 begins with Canada's most popular text, Wives Submit to Your Husbands.

And so that's the very next text. And in fact, after that, after it talks about husbands and wives, it talks about parents and children, and then it talks about slaves and masters.

So I just ask your prayers. I did actually consider, because next Sunday is the beginning of Advent, I actually did consider that we would just break after this sermon and then reconvene these sermons in the new year.

[1 : 1 0] But I decided not to do it for two reasons. One of them was it could give people the impression that we were going to avoid the text altogether. They'd say, oh, okay, George is fine to preach the Bible when it's things he likes, but when it's a bit contraculture or naughty, he skips it.

And I didn't want to give that impression. One of the things, you know, for those who are watching this online and those of you who are here, is that we preach through books of the Bible, and that's good. If you're a seeker or you're a skeptic about the Christian faith, it's a good thing.

It shows that there's no fine print that you have to worry about later on. We walk towards these texts. The other reason I decided not to hold back on it is it could give the false impression if on January 10th, after our sort of Christmas break, people came back, and the first thing I did was preach a sermon on wives, submit to your husbands, people would go, why does George have a thing about this?

Like, what a weird thing to do. So I thought, you know what, we're just going to do with it. And at first I was going to deal with wives and husbands and slaves and masters in the same sermon. And a friend of mine talked me out of it, not because it would be bad to have those two things together.

But as you know, there's great events causing turmoil in south of the border and north of the border here in Canada. And for many, many, many people in the chattering classes, it's just assumed that the Bible condones slavery and therefore condones racism and is not at all a source of wisdom.

[2 : 4 2] And so he convinced me that I'm... So over the next... Here's the prayer request. Over the next two Sundays, I'm going to talk about the wives and husbands text, and I'm going to talk about the slavery text.

And so if you could just give me some extra prayers over these next two weeks that I could do that in a good manner, just bringing out what the text actually says.

Now, I don't know how many of you noticed when Shane read the text, but there's a part of what Shane read this morning that can cause a lot of anxiety for Christians. So what we're going to do is we're just going to read Colossians 3, 5 to 15 to 17, and we're going to walk towards this text which causes many Christians anxiety.

And we'll read the text and I'll say why it causes anxiety, and then we'll sort of walk towards that. We'll try to figure out what's going on in the text. And here's what the text says again.

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you are called in one body, and be thankful. 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.

[3 : 58] 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. So what's the part there? Well, there's several things which are a bit problematic.

I mean, just if you were, I think, to say to many of your non-Christian friends that Christians want Christ to rule in their heart, they'd think that's very weird. Like who on earth wants some dead guy to rule in their hearts?

Like that's just a bit kooky. We'll get to that in a moment. But here's the thing. I don't know. There's enough people here and enough people watching this online that you're probably a wide range of emotions. I would be shocked if there isn't a single person here struggling with anxiety.

I would be shocked if there isn't a single person here struggling with depression. I would be shocked if there isn't a person here struggling with loneliness or sadness.

There's almost definitely people here who are struggling with these types of issues and other issues similar to that. And so here we have a text that says in verse 15, And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body and be thankful.

[5 : 07] And I know that for many years as a Christian, I would read texts like this or have texts like this read, and it would actually make me feel worse. Why? Because I didn't have that peace in my heart.

I was struggling with anxiety. In fact, I was lucky to struggle with it. Anxiety was winning. Worry was winning. Sadness was winning.

Loneliness was winning. Depression was winning. And yet here we have this text, and it makes it sound as if like real Christians are letting Christ rule in their hearts, and they don't feel those types of things.

They're not anxious. They're not sad. They're not depressed. They're not lonely. They're not filled with worry. And it would be even harder because I would be sitting in a congregation like this or some other gathering, and inwardly I'm struggling with this, and all around, all the other people, they have their good Christian game faces on, and I would feel as if I was the only one that there was some secret to the Christian life that I had misplaced or hadn't got it, because everybody else seemed as if that was what their life was like, at least that particular moment in the service, and here I was not experiencing these things at all.

And so, ironically or paradoxically, the text that should be calling me to peace was actually making me feel more worried, more depressed, more alone, more sad, because somehow or another I had missed whatever it was that everybody else seemed to have.

[6 : 34] And so, in a sense, the devil used this text, which would be a help to me, to actually make it harder. Why is it that this text is implying that Christians should feel and be a certain type of way, and I was not experiencing that right this instant?

Is there something wrong with me? And often, if you're at all, often what happens is that two types of things happen. I mean, one is that you can just feel worse, but often what happens over time is that Christians can become deeply cynical.

And by cynical, I mean there's these expectations of the text, which are way up here, and your experience seems to be way down here.

And so what ends up tending to happen is you become cynical about the height. And you know you don't go out and try to diss it or anything like that, but you just sort of come to the acceptance that this is what the real Christian life is like.

And maybe roll your eyes then when you listen to somebody in the radio or read a book, and they talk about these types of things, and you've become cynical. You've come to think that you've seen through the appearances to reality, and the reality is that the Christian life is not like this, but the Christian life is down here on a good day, and often even lower.

[7 : 50] And so what's going on in this really odd text then? For those of you who've never struggled with depression, sadness, loneliness, worry, or anxiety, take this as an anthropological moment to understand the rest of humanity.

But for those of us who have struggled with these things and lost, what actually is going on in the text? So first of all, this text, those of you who've been charting with us over the last few weeks, you'll know that this is part of a...

One way to understand it is that from... Andrew, if you could put the chart up, that would be very helpful. Some of you will be familiar with this if you've been here over the last couple of weeks, and you'll notice that what I've been suggesting is that in the book of Colossians, beginning at verse 16 of chapter 2, right down to chapter 3, verse 17, Paul is actually presenting, in a sense, not six steps to godliness, but in a sense, if you...

It's as if there's a... You know, if you shine a light into a diamond, you see a range of, you know, colors and everything that come out of it, and it's as if, if you're sort of to reverse engineer that, there's these six aspects to how it is that God grows you.

And so it's not like a step-to-step to success, but it's just trying to bring before you, in a sense... Like if you were to try to break down what it was involved in running or walking, those of you who, if you know occupational therapists or physiotherapists, they break down simple motions into the different aspects to do something which is just one motion.

[9 : 24] In some ways, what Paul is doing here is describing... And this is one way to put it together in the Bible. There's other ways which are fit with it. The six aspects of how it is that God grows you.

And so you might remember... And so what we're looking at in verses 15 and 17 is the last two aspects of these six aspects. We're looking at the one where you let Christ rule in your heart and do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so it begins, the chart begins, some of you will remember, where Paul says there's this fundamental choice that you have to make. Are you going to grow yourself or is God going to grow you?

And for a Christian, you're made right with God, not because of you being able to do it, but because God does everything that needs to be done in the person of his Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit. He does everything that has to be done to make you right with him.

But a lot of us, we believe that, but then we go on and act as if becoming more like Christ is mainly up to us. And so Paul has this section and the end of it is, who's going to grow you?

[10 : 31] Will you grow you? Or will I grow me? Or will I let the Lord grow me? And he hopes that you come to understand that you have to make the choice that God will grow me.

And I share, in fact, if you can put up that picture, I shared that, in fact, what happens is we have this, you know, human beings apart from Christ are like a cut rose, cut off from the ground, cut off from the source of life.

And when we put our faith and trust in Christ, in a sense, we are reconnected to the source of life. But it's more than that. We're reconnected to the source of eternal life. So all of our self-help projects are really cut rose projects.

But God doesn't want to make us into a cut rose. He wants to make us into a giant sequoia. And some people said they didn't know what a giant sequoia is. So I asked Andrew to find a picture.

Giant sequoias are the biggest trees on the planet. That's to give you just a tiny little bit of a sense about how big a giant sequoia is. So we, in a sense, one of the wonderful things about being a Christian is God, in a sense, is saying give up your small ambitions.

[11 : 36] Give up your ambitions to be a better cut rose. Like, die to those. Don't you realize that I want to connect you through Jesus to the eternal life of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

That's my plan. And I want you to die to your cut rose projects because no cut rose can connect itself back to life. And beyond that, you connect yourself to me in eternal life.

I have a big surprise for you. I'm not making you into a rose that's connected to the ground. I'm turning you into a giant sequoia. And only God can do that. And so, if you go, yeah, there's the chart.

If you realize that's the first step, that in a sense we have, not the step, but it's one aspect. Only the Lord can grow me into something that will be fit for eternal life and eternal fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Only God can make me so that when I see Jesus, I will be like him. And then, well, what's another aspect of it? The second aspect of it is you set your mind on Christ.

[12 : 37] And that, I talk about how we set our mind on all sorts of things. The Bible says there's lots of times we should do it. Maybe every day or going into meetings or certain types of situations where I say, God, help me to set my mind on Christ and all his risen, given that he died for me on the cross, set my mind on Christ and all his risen, sovereign, Trinitarian glory.

And then, another aspect of that is I'm saying, God, you have to grow me. I put myself in a posture for you to grow me. I'm going to set my mind on Christ. And I come to realize I have to put things off.

And they use the illustration of clothing. That I go into situations and I'm motivated by rivalry. I'm motivated by a desire to boast. I'm motivated to show that I'm always right.

I'm motivated, you know, maybe by lust or by greed or by desire for power. And I have to put those things off. That's the clothing analogy. And then, the Bible is so wise because it's not just putting off.

I think as I shared with it when I was talking about it, one way of defining somebody who only breathes out but never breathes in, it's called death, your final breath. So the Bible doesn't just call you to breathe out the stuff.

[13 : 50] You have to breathe in. And so, you know, God, only you can grow me. Help me to set my mind on Christ and all of his risen, sovereign, Trinitarian glory. Father, I realize that I have this rivalry or this boasting or this pride.

Help me to put it off. I take it off. Help me to take it off and put on, and you put on humility, on love, the different Christian virtues. And now there's these two other steps and it's very important because the Christian life now is, the Christian life, you are in Christ when you put your faith and trust in Jesus.

You are in him and he is in you. So you face life not by yourself, but in him and with him. And that's now where these two verses come. And so, just again, what do they say?

It says in verse 15, and let. That's give permission. Invite and give permission. That's what let means. Like, in a sense, to say to Christ, Lord, please speak and rule in all of my heart.

No area is out of bounds to you. I hold nothing back. Make your home in me so I may live a grateful life for your glory. It's inviting and giving him permission to come in.

[15 : 00] Verse 15, and 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 dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your heart to God.

That's the letting. And then the final thing, 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. But, once again, there's some of us here who struggle, right now today, are struggling with sadness.

We're struggling with grief. We're struggling with anxiety. We're struggling with worry. We're struggling with these things. And we read this text about let Christ rule in your heart with his peace.

And we're not feeling that. And maybe even right now, you thought, that's a brilliant prayer that you just prayed, George. I'm going to pray this right now. And dang it, after you pray the prayer, you still feel anxious, you still feel lonely, you still feel sad, you still feel grief.

So what on earth is going on? So here's the problem that we Christians have. We Christians, we just think of peace, this type of peace, in one way.

[16 : 12] In fact, we just think that there's really no other way, ultimately, to think about it other than as a type of, a set of pleasant emotions. And that's what we understand by it.

Like in our culture, we talk about negative emotions, negative emotions, and positive emotions. It's just, I hear Christians use that language all of the time. And, and, uh, uh, pleasant, uh, positive emotions are ones that we feel pleasure in having.

And negative emotions are ones that we don't feel any pleasure in having. And we just assume that when we see the word peace, that we're asking God to give us this set of positive emotions which we identify with peace.

And we just so completely and utterly believe that, it's hard for us to imagine that the Bible, like in a sense, if Paul was, he could go back in time and tell Paul, this is your problem with what he just wrote, he would look at you and said, huh?

Like, haven't you ever heard? And he would ask you, because obviously they knew that there were feelings and emotions, I mean, it wasn't as if that was just invented by North Americans 70 years ago. People had emotions back then.

[17 : 21] But he would understand, no, no, the text isn't talking about God giving you emotions, it's talking about something objective, to which we would then go to him, huh? Like, how does that even make any type of sense?

Do you mean objective? Do you mean it's permanent? No. So here's the analogy, and here's, I think, an analogy that would help you to understand it. Imagine that you're off in the bush or something like that.

Compassion gets you to go on some remote little compassion project a week down the Amazon or something like that, and you break your leg. And while you break your leg, they can't really fix it, or they sort of fix it, but they do a really crappy job.

You and your buddies do a really crappy job. And it hurts the whole time, and in fact, it even starts to set, but it's not setting correctly. However, it's not that bad because one of the people on the tour have a lot of drugs, and they basically just give you enough drugs all the time that rather than feeling the broken leg, you actually feel pretty good.

You have to hop everywhere, but you actually feel pretty good. And so, that's the difference between subjective and objective. You see, what we tend to think of is it's something like a feeling.

[18 : 35] In other words, what we're really thinking when we read this text, we want God to give us a drug that will make us feel positive emotions. But God said, no, I'm going to fix the broken leg.

Like, I'm going to bring you health. That means, I'm going to break, re-break your leg because it didn't help, it didn't set, right.

Yes, you heard me right, George. I'm going to re-break that part. I mean, that's what you want the doctor to do. I don't know how many of you have watched, one of my favorite movies is 13 Hours. I'm a sucker for real life war heroism movies.

It's like, I'm a sucker for it. And it's based, 13 Hours is a movie based on 2012 Benghazi in Libya when the US ambassador to Libya was killed and the compound was overrun and there was a big battle around another compound and it was a story about these six special forces contractors who basically defend this reel for 13 hours.

Anyway, that's the movie. It's not a spoiler, but one of the people in the movie gets hit by a mortar and it wrecks up his leg. Other things happen to the rest of them.

[19 : 55] And one of the things about the movie is at the end, if you watch the movie right to the end, they show you the picture of the person, what the person really looked like. And I can't remember, but I think to get his leg fixed, it took 13 surgeries.

It was something like that, 13 surgeries to get his leg fixed. And so you see, that's what's going on. That's what the piece is. That's what you're asking God to do. You're asking Christ to come in and rule in your heart and what you're asking him to do is to do those surgeries, those breaking and re-breaking and the surgeries and the splints and all of the discomfort to be healed.

That's what he will do objectively. You see, if we had a friend, like if that person was our friend, the person who needed 13 surgeries, and he said, you know what?

They can just give me an endless supply of drugs that makes me feel good and I'll just hop for the rest of my life on one leg. You'd say to him, you're nuts. Like who on earth, like what rational person would ever choose that?

Right? That's how we would do it. So in the text, when it's saying, when you're saying Christ, because Christ is the Prince of Peace, right? What is Christ? Christ is the one who by his sinless life, the life that you could never live on your own, has lived the life that you need to live but you were never able to live.

[21 : 14] And his death upon the cross is a dying for the, all of the consequences, all the just accusations and consequences against you which are properly yours that, you know, should properly fall on you, properly fall on you, they fall on him.

And so he both, in a sense, clothes us with his righteous life and he deals with the consequences of our sin and so when we put our faith and trust in him, he enters into us and we enter into him and he makes us right with God.

He reconnects us to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the life of the Trinity. He reconnects us objectively.

The lowliest person, the worst person who puts their faith in Christ, that's what objectively has happened to them. Not God weighing your merit, saying you're a good boy, pretending you're a good boy.

No. He says, you're a really terrible person. I know you're a really terrible person. In fact, God says, you're vastly worse than you even imagined. You're vastly worse than your enemies who think you're bad.

[22 : 23] You're actually worse than that. But I love you. And Jesus came to die upon the cross, taking all of the worst that you have done and dealing with that in terms of the consequences that were required by justice and by love and by goodness.

And the life that you could never, ever possibly live, that is what will clothe you. And when you put your faith and trust in my son, who's risen from the dead, he makes you right with God and reconnects you to him.

And so he is the prince of peace. And when we ask him to come and rule in our hearts and our minds, he's saying, well, George, I could give you an overwhelming emotion that would just cover up all those things within you which are broken.

I could do that. But wouldn't you rather be fit for heaven? Wouldn't you rather have those times when I break you? Break you out of love? You ask me to rule, I will rule.

I will come to break and to heal, to reconnect. And not only that, George, at the end of it all, you won't just be a rose connected to the plant.

[23 : 41] You will see me face to face and I will smile and say, I am so glad you are here. And then you will see Jesus and your great, complete and utter shock, you will be like him.

And I have been working on that and that's my plan. That's what I will work on in you and with you. That's what you're asking Christ to do. You are asking Christ. When you say, Jesus, Jesus, I please speak and rule in all my heart.

No area is out of bounds to you. I hold nothing back. Make your home in me so I may live a grateful life for your glory. You put yourself in that posture. I can't grow me. I can't fix me.

But I know that when I, as I read your word, because that's what the word of Christ is. The word of Christ is in a sense, it's the good news of the gospel. The good news of the gospel in the context of what all of the Bible teaches.

And it's what all of the Bible teaches in the context of the gospel. That's what the word of Christ is. It's not just the Bible. It's the Bible understood in light of the gospel.

[24 : 43] And it's not just the gospel. It's the gospel understood in light of all of the Bible. That as we read the word and we read the word and we say, Jesus, I'm not just, I know it's not just a matter of reading words.

This is the means of grace. You have said that you not only are to rule in my heart but you can't, he can't rule if he doesn't speak. Can he? And how can he speak without ruling?

When our kids were young, I would like to tell them, this would be one of those dad things, they'd probably all roll their eyes at me. That's fine. That's kids, dads say things, kids roll their eyes. That's just, it's part of the dance, right?

And I'd say, this is a democracy. Every one of you kids has one vote, my vote's worth a billion, your mom's vote worth a billion, let's vote two billion to nine. Okay?

I guess we're going to do this. But it's a democracy. I just happen to get a billion votes. It's the same type of thing. If God's speaking into your life, it can't possibly be, well, my wife says this, my daughter says this, and God says this.

[25 : 44] Well, God, it's two against one. I guess I'm going to do what my wife and daughter says. No, he can't speak without ruling. And he can't dwell without ruling.

And so in the text, look at it again. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you are called in one body and be thankful. And 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.

And some of you are saying, well, this is a bit of a confusing text because it seems to be talking just to you, but then it seems to talk as if it's talking to all of us. And here's one of the things which is so important in the Bible.

I know there's a whole pile of Christians which say you're not supposed to dance. But this text is introducing us to the profound call to the great dance. And in that great dance, it's this.

The Bible always speaks to us personally. It speaks to me as George. George, you need to die to your cut rose projects.

[26 : 54] You need to realize that only I, this is in a sense what God is saying, George, you need to realize that only I can grow you. You need to put yourself in a humble posture of obedience so that I can grow you.

And set your mind on Christ and put off your sin and put on virtues and call out to me. I'm so wishing for you, George, to call out to me in today and say, Jesus, speak in my heart, rule in my heart.

There's, you have all of my heart. I have no conditions. I hold nothing back. In the heights of my heart, the depths of my heart, the widths of my heart, the heights and depths of my life, in every emotion, in every thought, every penny under my control, all my time, come and speak and rule in my heart.

I know you will bring peace because you are the Prince of Peace. And God wants us to say that to him in a humble posture of obedience and to say it over and over and over again because we live in time and it's not as if we just say it to him once, just as if I only said to my wife once, I love you and then you should just believe me for the rest of your life.

We would all know that that is inadequate. That's not how human beings function. It's no different with God. Like, I don't say these things hoping that if I say it to him enough that he'll finally love me, it comes out of the fact that I said it to him once for him to become my Savior and Lord, that I say it to him time and time and time again.

[28 : 24] It's because I need to. I need to come to him time and time again because it's so easy to allow rivalry or boasting or pride or envy or greed or impatience to start to rule my life.

I need to keep, remember, oh yes, okay, set my mind on Christ, put off this. Father, help me to put on love and humility and let come in and rule and speak.

And here's the great dance. It's a personal word to me, but it's a word to all of us at the same time. You see, it's not just that I'm to have my private times reading the Bible or to listening to some beautiful music that has spiritual words and biblical words and wisdom that can speak to my heart, but I need you to tell me things about the Bible.

I need you and others to teach me. I need you to sing. I need you to sing while I'm here. And you need me to do that to you too.

You need to hear me singing and speaking the word. You see, it's this dance between, if you go, I think there's like 70 or 80 times in the Bible the phrase one another, in the New Testament, the phrase one another comes.

[29 : 35] There's all these one another texts and that's the wonderful dance. We're constantly being reminded of the one another, but we're also constantly being reminded of the one. It's not just the one, the one, the one, the one, the one.

It's not just the other, the other, the other, the other. It's the one and the one another. There's this dance. You see, that's why we need to gather and worship. It's why we need to be in small groups.

It's why we need to have mentors and spiritual friendships. It's why we need to have Christian families. families. It's why, you know, especially during this time of lockdowns when families can't bring their kids to Awana or bring their kids to Sunday school, it's really important for parents to not just watch Messiah Kids online, but to maybe embrace the discipline of doing the New City Catechism with your family throughout the week or the Heidelberg Catechism or making sure there's a time every day when you just read a Bible story with your kids or for moms and dads, but especially, it's often moms.

Most of us really learn how to pray from our moms. I'm not saying this so that dads can get let off the hook, but it's often the moms that are really the best at teaching their kids how to pray and to pray for your kids and to say grace, like the means of grace that you need to take on in your home because we need Christian families.

We need small groups. We need spiritual friendships. We need that. We need the one another. We need to have it that there's a wide group.

[31 : 07] And by the way, in case I suggested this to Amy because she's singing today a psalm, a hymn, and a spiritual song, by the way. We sang a hymn at the offertory.

We're going to sing a psalm and then we'll sing a spiritual song. That's just a bit of a, I thought, whoa, you know, it can be organized occasionally here at Church of the Messiah. So, just one final thing about this text.

So, this is the let, right? The let is just, is saying, having this posture where you say to God, you know, I could go on and on and on and on about this because it helps you to understand why so many things that the world, our culture at a certain particular time says are fine or just completely abhorrent.

You know, if you went back in time to 1860, a slave owner couldn't say, Jesus rule in my heart except when it comes to slavery. That would be, a slum landlord couldn't say, can't say, come and rule in my heart except when it comes to how I deal with my tenants.

If, if, if you were watching this and you're, and you have a sweatshop, you can't say, Lord, come and rule in my heart except when it comes to how I deal with my employees. You can't say, Lord, come and rule in my heart except when it touches on my sexuality.

[32 : 25] You can't say, Lord, come and rule in my heart except when it comes to how I handle money and whether I'm going to be generous. And the call is, okay, you can come, Lord, and be the Prince of Peace in my guest room and in the workshop, but everywhere else is out of bounds.

No. Lord Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, I invite and give you permission to come into all of my heart. I hold nothing back, nothing at all.

Please rule in it and speak into it. And one just final thing, the final text, the do, verse 17, and whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

It's our memory verse for the week. All of these three verses could have been the memory verses, by the way. They're good verses to memorize. 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.

And obviously, because it's part of this, in a sense, this set, right? It doesn't mean, oh, I can lie in the name of Jesus. I can cheat in the name of Jesus. I can steal.

[33 : 35] No, no, those are things that you're putting off, right? And it's not just saying that you should be thankful for the terrible thing that happens to you. It's not calling to be thankful for the fact that the doctor just said you have stage 3 cancer or the doctor just tells you you have a serious heart condition or you've just heard that you've had a terrible financial setback.

It's not saying be thankful for these. What it's saying is that you don't walk the Christian life by yourself. I mean, not only do you have the one another, more importantly, you do it with Jesus. And you have to do whatever you have to do to deal with that stage 3 cancer, whatever you have to do to do with the heart problems, whatever you have to deal with to do with the financial setback or the relational setback or the job setback that you've just had.

You have to deal with it. But you do it in the name of Jesus giving thanks to the God, the Father. You're doing it, giving thanks. One of the things you're primarily giving thanks to is this. The end of the story changes the whole story.

The end of the story changes the whole story. And remember, at the beginning of this, what do you do? You set your mind on Christ in light of the cross.

You set your mind on Christ in all his risen, sovereign, Trinitarian glory. Because at the end of the story for you, if you are in Christ, whether the end of the story is because Jesus returns before you die, if you're one of the lucky ones who will be here when he returns, or if it isn't in the moment of death when you see God face to face, the end of the story for you is that God the Father gives you the biggest smile you have ever seen in your entire life.

[35 : 17] And says, I am so glad you are finally here. I am so glad you can see me with no veil, nothing hidden.

And the end of the story is that not only does the Father give you the biggest smile that you have ever seen, radiating warmth is that you then see Jesus.

And the next thing you know, you look down at yourself and you don't even recognize yourself because you have become like him. And that is the end of your story. And so you can walk towards difficulties and you can walk towards troubles.

And you can walk towards successes and you can walk towards joys and you can walk towards growth and all of those things, but you can do everything in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father, grateful for grace.

Here's this final thing I want to share with you. It's a real, it just, I wasn't going to talk about it. It was in my notes, but as I was driving here, I just really felt that I needed to add it, even if it adds an extra minute or two to the sermon.

[36 : 24] To understand verse 17 is to completely and utterly begin to lose the pagan sense of God's will that captivates the church. You see, many Christians have a completely pagan notion of God's will that if it comes down to me trying to discern, should I go to this school?

Should I go to Ottawa U or should I go to Carleton? Should I go to Ottawa U or go to Queens? Or should I get this house or should I go to that house? And a lot of times we Christians have this understanding that if you miss God's will, your life is screwed.

You know that the rest of your life is just in turmoil because you should have gone to Ottawa U, not Carleton, or whatever it is. You should have taken job A, not job B.

You know, you should have done whatever. And that's a pagan notion. Do you see that anywhere here in verse 17? It doesn't say, and whenever you finally figure out what God's will is, then all these good things will happen, but if not, it sucks to be you because your life is screwed up.

No, that's not what it says. What does it say? Obviously, it's not saying choose sin and God will... No, it's saying, you know what? Think through the best thing about whether you should go to this university or that, or which house you should buy, or which job you should take, or when you retire, or, you know, whether to plant roses, or what...

[37 : 45] Like, think the best thing you can. Like, pray about it and think about it. God doesn't want to... Do your life with Jesus, but you know what? Whatever you do, whether you go to Ottawa or you're at Carleton, or you work for this job or that, or you...

Whatever you do, do it in the name of Jesus with thanksgiving, and you know what? God is going to bless you. He's going to bless you. He's going to make you into...

He's only making you into a giant sequoia. It's an invitation to living in a way better way.

Andrew, could you put up the final point, please? I'd like you all to stand because I bring the sermon to an end. And the final point is a bit of a prayer, and it's...

I put it down as, Lord, speak and rule in all my heart. No area is out of bounds to you. I hold nothing back. Make your home in me so I may live a grateful life for your glory.

[38 : 44] That's trying to summarize the whole teaching of this text. And it's the culmination of the text. And one of the things which I invite you... You know, you can use your own words. I write this down because maybe it would be something that'd help you.

But, you know, for those of you who haven't given your life to Christ, this can also be a conversion prayer for you. Like, it's both, in a sense, very, very real sense.

The way, if you haven't... If you've not always been a Christian, and this could be... If you speak to Jesus, he hears it, and he'll do this.

He will make his home in you. Like, he will do it. And for those of us who are Christians, it's just part of living out verses 15, 16, and 17. It's a prayer for every day of our life, for the rest of our life.

And for those who haven't given their lives to Christ, it's the beginning of new life. So, there's no... You don't have to say it out loud with me, but if the Lord puts it on your heart, if you would join with me in praying this prayer.

[39 : 48] Lord, please speak and rule in all my heart. No area is out of bounds to you. I hold nothing back. Make your home in me so I may live a grateful life for your glory.

We should add in Jesus' name. Amen. So, let's just pray. Father, we ask that you would bring these words home. We thank you, Father, that you don't just want to give us drugs that covers over a leg that...

or things in our lives that would require 13 surgeries. Father, you don't just give us drugs, leaving us broken and rotting, but that you bring life.

You want to reorder and heal us so that we are healthy and whole and fit for heaven. Father, we thank you that you are vast... you have a vastly wiser and better plan for us than what our culture suggests we need.

And we ask, Father, that you help us to fix our minds and keep our minds in Christ. Help us to be faithful in reading your word and sharing your word and singing over each other and speaking into each other's lives and speaking and receiving that.

[40 : 53] Father, help us to be such individuals and such a church all for your glory. We ask not only for those at 8, those at 10, and those who are part of our online congregation, Father, we ask for this wonderful act of reformation and revival in our lives all for your glory.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus and all God's people said, Amen.