

Thanksgiving: A Way of Life

Psalm 100

I. INTRODUCTION: I

- I. Thanking God for our many blessings should be a way of life, not an occasional or seasonal gesture.
 - A. **2** The spirit of thanksgiving should animate the heart and life of every true servant of God.
 - B. In reality, all men owe God daily gratitude because: *“it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name”* (Psa. 100).
 - C. God is greatly pleased when humble hearts *“magnify him with thanksgiving,”* but He is greatly angered when we harden our hearts and ignore His blessings and resist His commandments (Psa. 69:29-32: *“But I am poor and sorrowful; Let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high. 30 I will praise the name of God with a song, And will magnify Him with thanksgiving. 31 This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bull, Which has horns and hooves. 32 The humble shall see this and be glad; And you who seek God, your hearts shall live.”*; Psa. 95:1-3: *“Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. 3 For the LORD is the great God, And the great King above all gods.”*).
 - D. Ungrateful hearts fall deeper and deeper into the darkness of sin and error, by doing so we put God out of our minds and become *“haters of God”* (Rom. 1:18-21, 28-32).
2. **3** The spirit of true thanksgiving to God requires that we receive Christ by obeying his gospel and that we continue to *“walk...in him”* by abiding in his teaching (Col. 2:5-10).
 - A. We receive Christ when we are *“buried with him in baptism”* (v. 12).
 - B. Then, we worship him in spirit and in truth, *“giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Jn. 4:24; Eph. 5:19-20: *“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,”*).
 - C. Our trust in the Lord grows and He guards our hearts and as we draw near to Him in prayer *“with thanksgiving”* (Phil. 4:4-7).
3. **4** Let's examine some ways we should express our thanks to God so we can make Thanksgiving: A Way of Life. We need to be thankful for...

II. DISCUSSION:

- I. **5** Physical and Material Blessings: Let us thank God daily for all physical and material blessings.
 - A. Because of our daily dependence on food, it represents all blessings which sustain life (Matt. 6:25-34; 5:45: *“that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”*; Acts 14:17: *“Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”*).
 - B. Therefore, God places special emphasis upon our giving thanks for our food as a constant reminder of our dependence on Him for all things.
 - (1) Jesus himself taught this spirit when he fed 4,000 people with a few loaves and fishes; first, he *“gave thanks”* (Mk. 8:6-7: *“So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude. 7 They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them.”*).

- (2) When a similar miracle was performed another time, the food was eaten only after “the Lord had given thanks” (**Jn. 6:11**: “And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.”).
 - (3) When Paul was transported to Rome as a prisoner, the ship carrying 276 people passed through a storm. Afterward, Paul urged everyone to eat, but before anyone ate, he “gave thanks to God in presence of them all” (Acts 27:35).
- C. God intends for food “to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.” Some foods are forbidden by pagan religions, false teachers who profess Christ, doctrinaire vegetarians, and certain environmental and animal rights extremists, but all foods God made may be eaten on the basis of His teaching and our thanksgiving (**1 Tim. 4:3-5**: “forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; 5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”).
- D. The universe was created by Jesus Christ and continues to exist and function by his divine power—“by him all things consist” (Col. 1:16-17). Every human life, every breath of air, every new day, every night of rest, every bite of food, every thread of clothing, every moment of health, every recovery from sickness, every scriptural marriage, every child, every true friendship, every drop of water, every talent or ability, every color, every ray of sunlight, every beam of moonlight, every twinkling star, every form of flora and fauna on the face of the earth, every expression of beauty, every blessing of every kind—**they all are gifts and favors bestowed on us by the hand of God!** This being so then: “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” (Psa. 107:8)
2. **6 All Spiritual Blessings:** The spirit of true thanksgiving to God leads us to thank Him daily for all spiritual blessings.
- A. These benefits are even greater in meaning to us than the physical and material things of life: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).
- (1) These blessings are called “the unsearchable riches of Christ” because their value to our souls is beyond measure, comparison, or full comprehension (Eph. 3:8).
 - (2) Spiritual blessings are so precious because they involve our fellowship with God which extends throughout earth life and into eternity—“having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8).
 - (3) Notice that “all spiritual blessings” are found only “in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).
 - (4) God of His own free will provided these gifts and favors in Christ.
 - (5) The creation of this spiritual realm or relationship by God is unconditional, but the reception of its blessings by man is conditional.
 - (6) God does not force men to enter this spiritual relationship in Christ, but he invites all men to enter (**Matt. 11:28-30**: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”).
 - (7) God invites men through the proclamation of the gospel, which was revealed in Scripture by His Spirit (Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Thess. 2:13-14).

- B. Thus, when men hear this teaching, believe it, repent of their sins, and submit to water baptism, they are “*born of the water and of the Spirit*” and “*enter into the kingdom of God*” to enjoy all its spiritual benefits (Jn. 3:5).

3. **7** The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ

- A. In God’s moral government over man, sin brings death or separation of man from God (**Isa. 59:2**: “*But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.*”).
- (1) To impress man with the seriousness of sin, and at the same time to provide a remedy for sin, God required the death or sacrifice of animals “*to make an atonement for your souls,*” i.e., as a means of man’s reconciliation to God (Lev. 17:11).
 - (2) Each time an animal was sacrificed, man was reminded that sin brings death and that God offers forgiveness. The animal sacrifices of Old Testament history pointed toward the final, perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the true basis upon which God forgives man’s sins (**Heb. 10:1-4**).
- B. Christ died to “*sanctify the people with his own blood....By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name*” (**Heb. 13:10-15**; **Rom. 3:25-26**: “*whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*”).
- (1) We honor Christ by confessing, proclaiming, and defending his name both in worship and in daily life.
 - (2) In preparing to eat the Lord’s Supper as a memorial of Christ’s death, we first thank God for the gift of his Son (Matt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 10:16; **11:23-26**).

4. **8** Salvation From Sin

- A. In spite of his best intentions, every responsible person sins in thought, word, and deed, thus falling into “*captivity to the law of sin....O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord....There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*” (Rom. 7:22-8:2).
- B. Christ breaks our bondage to both the guilt and the practice of sin. To say we have “*all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*” means we are “*chosen*” in him, “*adopted*” in him, “*accepted*” in him, and “*redeemed*” from our sins “*in Him*” (**Eph. 1:3-7**).
- C. Regarding himself as chief of sinners, Paul thanked Christ Jesus our Lord for extending grace, mercy, and patience, which resulted in Paul’s salvation: “*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*” (**1 Tim. 1:12-17**).

5. **9** Revelation and Confirmation of the Truth

- A. No message is so great, so awe-inspiring, so astonishing as the gospel: “*God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory*” (1 Tim. 3:16).
- B. This message would be incredible had God not revealed and confirmed it “*by many infallible proofs*” (Acts 1:3). The gospel was revealed and confirmed by fulfilled prophecies, by miracles, and by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- (1) It is not a collection of so-called pious myths but is attested by eyewitnesses (**2 Pet. 1:3**: “as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,”; **Heb. 2:3-4**: “how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”; Rom. 1:4).
- (2) Paul told the Corinthians, “I thank my God always on your behalf,” because God had so firmly established the truth among them (**1 Cor. 1:4-9**).

4. **10** God’s Gift of the Truth to Pure, Humble and Honest Hearts

- A. Jesus thanked the Father “because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (**Matt. 11:25-27**).
 - (1) Jesus taught the truth to many people who refused it because they were proud, conceited, selfish, self-important, and self-sufficient.
 - (2) Then, as now, many said, “I am satisfied with my religion and don’t see any need to change.”
 - (3) With many people, truth and what pleases God are secondary to whatever satisfies themselves (**Matt. 15:3-9**).
 - (4) Because of such attitudes, even when they hear the truth they “just don’t get it.”
- B. The simple truth sounds strange, narrow, legalistic, and judgmental to the carnal mind.
 - (1) “How can Jesus and his little group claim to have the truth and all the other religions in the world be wrong?”
 - (2) “How can so few be right and so many be wrong?” (**Matt. 7:13-14**)
 - (3) “I want a religion that lets me drink, gamble, curse, lie, mistreat my family, and miss church when it suits me and still feel good about myself.” (e.g., Catholicism)
- C. Humble hearts seek the truth of God’s Word, but proud and carnal hearts seek sensationalism, emotionalism, and intellectualism.
 - (1) To the sinful mind, the simple truths of the gospel seem foolish and weak (**1 Cor. 1:18-31**).
 - (2) God designed the gospel to save man in God’s own way, not in a way which flatters, appeases, or compromises with the sinner. Not in a way that appeals to man’s pride and intellectual vanity.
 - (3) If it were any other way, man rather than God would be praised and glorified.
 - (4) Salvation is on God’s terms, the terms of the gospel, “as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (**1 Cor. 1:31**).

5. **11** Those Who Obey the Gospel

- A. Paul thanked God for people in wicked Rome who once served sin but then obeyed the gospel: **Rom. 6:17-18**: “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”
- B. They were freed from sin and became servants of righteousness when they “were baptized into Jesus Christ” (**Rom. 6:3-4**).
- C. Paul thanked God for those who received the gospel “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God,” in spite of much opposition and persecution (**1 Thess. 2:13-14**: “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you

welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. 14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans,”; **Jas. 1:21**: “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”; Philippines reports, pictures).

6. **12** Faithful Christians

- A. We can be thankful for the inspiration and encouragement God gives us through the examples of faithful Christians (2 Pet. 1:1: “like precious faith”; **Rom. 1:8-12**).
- B. In affliction and distress, Paul was filled with comfort and joy to hear the good news of the constant faith, hope, and love of the saints at Thessalonica.
- C. He even told others about this wonderful example of endurance (**1 Thess. 3:5-13**; **2 Thess. 1:3-4**).
- D. Paul thanked God for the genuineness of Timothy’s faith, which he had learned from his mother and grandmother (**2 Tim. 1:3-5**: “I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, 4 greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, 5 when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.”; **2 Jn. 4**: “I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth,”).

7. **13** For Using Us to Spread the Gospel

- A. The smell of burning incense in ancient triumphal processions meant life to captives who were to be spared and death to others.
- B. We can thank God that he uses His people to spread the sweet aroma of the gospel everywhere we go, though we are loved by some and hated by others for doing so (**2 Cor. 2:14-17**).
- C. All who participate in spreading the gospel are “laborers together with God,” to whom all the glory and credit belongs (**1 Cor. 3:6-9**).
- D. There is no greater privilege than to preach “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (**Eph. 3:8-10**: “To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,”); and to have fellowship in that great work! Phil. 1:5

8. **14** For Success in Spiritual Labors

- A. God makes it possible for us to do the work we do under His direction, and He guides that work to fulfill its intended purpose.
- B. When Gentile Christians opened their hearts and hands to help destitute Jewish Christians, those who were helped offered “many thanksgivings unto God.” (2 Cor. 9:12)
- C. Seeing how God was binding Jew and Gentile together as one in Christ, Paul exclaimed, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (**2 Cor. 9:7-15**).
- D. We need to engage in such works for the benefit of others and for our own benefit! Acts 20:35; Lk. 18:22; Matt. 25:31-46

9. **15** Our Final Victory Over Sin and Death

- A. Do you contemplate this wonderful victory? You should! **Phil 1:21-23**: “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I

cannot tell. 23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”

- B. We will fight many battles before we lay our armor down, but we can thank God that the outcome is already certain because Christ has defeated Satan and will give us victory (Eph. 6:10-13; **1 Tim. 6:12**: “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”; **2 Tim. 4:6-8**: “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”).
- C Because Christ arose from the dead, “Death is swallowed up in victory....Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (**1 Cor. 15:54-58**).

III. CONCLUSION: 17

1. Are you living a life of thanksgiving?
2. While God’s people on earth continue to struggle against seemingly insurmountable odds, heaven already rings with praises of thanksgiving because the purposes of God will triumph in the end.
2. Satan’s defeat is a “done deal”! It’s certain beyond a shadow of doubt.
3. Truth and right will prevail over all sin and error.
4. If we are faithful, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall join the heavenly hosts in singing praises and thanksgivings to God for all eternity: ****** “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. 4:7-11).

Adapted from an article by Ron Halbrook.