

## Thankful to God

[This sermon in the series of messages on Theology Proper was delivered on the celebration of Thanksgiving Day]

God's awesome holiness, sovereignty, and our moral obligation to Him certainly frames the awesome nature of His grace towards us. He has every right to expect our submission, but knows that as sinners, we are unable to provide that on our own. So, He offers us His grace. We could not possibly make up for our sin, so in God's grace, He sent His Son to pay our judgment and extend a pardon for us to receive.

1John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*.

1John 4:9-10 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

The next thing that should follow the offering of His grace should be our thankfulness. There is nothing that we can offer in exchange for His grace, otherwise grace would not be grace. Just as we were taught to say "thank you" when we were kids, that is also the appropriate response for receiving God's grace and salvation.

Thankfulness is such a special subject. It requires our humility and acknowledges our need. If we practiced thankfulness we could really understand the blessed relationship we can have with God.

1Thess 5:18 In **every thing give thanks**: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Trusting in God and His goodness we know that we can give thanks in even the hard things. This was the case of the travelers on the Mayflower.

As the 90-ton Mayflower, captained by part-owner Christopher Jones, sailed for the New World in August, 1620, the 102 Pilgrims huddled in dark, low-ceilinged holds. Jones gave up his captain's quarters for the women and infants, but everyone else was crammed below deck in little hot rooms reeking with body odor. Because of rough seas, no hatches were open, and many of the passengers suffered seasickness amid violent storms that tossed the little craft like a cork.

The Pilgrims prayed and praised as best they could during the seven-week voyage. Upon landing at last, according to William Bradford, "they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all their perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth." God deserves our thanksgiving, too as He calms our storms and guides us to the desired haven. After their first successful harvest a year later, they celebrated with a feast with their Indian neighbors. The path to establish the freest culture in world history was difficult and subsequent days of thanksgiving continued to be religious celebrations. States maintained Thanksgiving Days until President Lincoln made it a national observance in the middle of the American Civil War. Of our 11 national holidays, only Thanksgiving and Christmas have religious significance. Although Christmas is founded on the humble birth of our Savior as man, its spirituality is able to be lost in the emphasis on a false premise of peace and covetous expectation of getting presents. Thanksgiving has the advantage of compelling us to be humble because being thankful reminds us of Who we are thankful to: God.

1. God provides for us above what we

could ask or think -

God provides for us in ways that we don't even know to ask or think of asking.

Eph 3:14-21 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

<sup>15</sup>Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

<sup>16</sup>That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

<sup>17</sup>That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

<sup>18</sup>May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

<sup>19</sup>And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

<sup>20</sup>Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

<sup>21</sup>Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

A child going to bed doesn't lay up all night worrying about where his next meal is coming from, or if the bills are getting paid, or who is going to be the next president. Similarly, we don't go to bed worrying about whether the sun has enough fuel for the next day, or if the currents in the ocean run, or if there be enough air to breath. If we knew how to pray and live in obedience to God, we wouldn't go to bed worrying about where our next meal is going to come from, will the bills get paid, or who is going to be the next president. On top of that, we take it for granted that the world will turn, the sun will come up, and there will be enough air to breath. God's supply is inexhaustible.

## 2. God answers our prayers out of His abundance -

God is able to provide above what we know to even ask for because He provides out of His infinite abundance.

Php 4:11-13,19 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Eph 4:7-10 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

Ro 12:6-8 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith;

7 Or ministry, *let us wait* on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

### 3. God extends His grace to all men -

To obtain eternal life, you need the grace of God where He provided His Son as a sacrifice for our sins. It is sad when you see people turning away salvation. Nevertheless, even before they have had someone to come to them to talk to them about that salvation, God has extended His grace to all.

Have you ever seen a sunset? The Aurora Borealis? A baby's fully functioning hand? The actual machinery that is inside every cell? The rivers that run the wrong way across mountain ranges? God is doing more than putting on an art show, He is giving you proof of His power and existence.

Ro 1:19-20 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Ps 19:1-2 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

He also graciously provided His Word for mankind.

2Ti 3:16-17 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

### 4. Remembering to thank God -

There are some great Scripture passages that speak of how people

thanked God but a favorite of mine is Luke 17:11-19 where a Samaritan leper was healed.

Luke 17:11-19 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

13 And they lifted up *their* voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

14 And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

16 And fell down on *his* face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine?

18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

What makes the leper's case so important is not the miraculous healing he received. It wasn't even how he *expressed* his gratitude. He did not have a flowery exaltation that he gave Jesus. The simplicity of his gratitude was not the outstanding character, either. The context of this passage is what reveals what was so special about his thankfulness.

The first thing you notice is that Jesus is merely passing through Samaria on His way to minister to somewhere else. He had also come to Samaria which was prejudiced against Jesus. There was no big deal about Christ's ministry being made in this area. The lepers had

obviously heard of the work of Jesus because they wasted no time seeking Him out. Jesus did heal them and told them to go see the priests, which was according to the Law. Of course, being in Samaria, this might be interpreted as contrary to going to the Jerusalem priests. All of these factors made it easier for the lepers to gloss over what just happened and not give thanks. Nevertheless, one turned back to give thanks. What is amazing about this passage the contrast between this one and the others. The outstanding characteristic of thanking God is actually *remembering to do it!*

It is so easy to treat life like running the hurdles. We run down the track anticipating the hurdle. When we get to it, we try to take the hurdle in stride the most efficiently way possible and press on to the next hurdle. We don't step over the hurdle, pause for a while and thank God for the health, training, strength, coach, drivers who got you to the training, diet, dietician, and science of running. Are we as careful to thank God as we are to bring prayer requests when we are in trouble? When we do our devotions, do we get through our Bible reading time and Santa Claus list of requests as quickly as we can? If we really thought about how blessed we are, we might be more in awe of what God is doing in our lives. Consider that 11% of the U.S. population is considered in poverty earning less than \$40/day per person. It is estimated that 70-80% of the world lives on less than this. In fact, about 48% of the world lives on \$6.85/day per person. How much do you think we might take for granted the way we live compared to the world? How much time could we spend thanking God for His blessings?

One of the blessings we have is Sunday morning testimonies. Do you ever think about the fact that it is called a *worship* service? Whether it is through testimony, song, or preaching, we are worshiping. This is more obvious in the testimonies and singing (we focus on praise on Sunday and prayer requests at the prayer meeting). In the preaching we

look for what God is trying to tell us, but even in that we ought to be saying "Thank you, God, for what you are showing me." When we recover from a sickness, we are more likely to remember to praise God for our restoration.

When we remember to give God thanks, it effects the greatest humility because it keeps from taking our blessings for granted and reminds us of our true dependence on God.

## 5. Thank God for His unspeakable gift -

Ps 49:6-9 They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;

7 None *of them* can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:

8 (For the redemption of their soul *is* precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)

9 That he should still live for ever, *and* not see corruption.

The cost of our redemption is priceless. No matter how much you ever might pay, it would never be enough. If our days are generally good we have to remember that some small problem could lay us low. Even in the low times we can find praises of gratitude for God, but don't wait for that to happen! We can always thank God for our salvation.

2Cor 9:13-15 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*;

14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

15 Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.

What is that unspeakable gift? It is the Gospel of Christ mentioned in vs. 13. Words will fail us to tell the wonders of God's amazing grace that gave us the gift



of salvation.

In order to be one with God in salvation, don't try to impress Him with our finite efforts. Tell Him "thank you" as for paying for your sins. Now, living for God is just a way to continue saying, "Thank you."

The love of God is  
greater far  
Than tongue or pen  
can ever tell;  
It goes beyond the  
highest star,  
And reaches to the  
lowest hell;  
The guilty pair, bowed  
down with care,  
God gave His Son to  
win;  
His erring child He  
reconciled,  
And pardoned from  
his sin.

O love of God, how  
rich and pure!  
How measure less and  
strong!  
It shall forever more  
endure

The saints' and angels'  
song.

Could we with ink the  
ocean fill,  
And were the skies of  
parchment made,  
Were every stalk on  
earth a quill,  
And every man a  
scribe by trade,  
To write the love of  
God above,  
Would drain the ocean  
dry.  
Nor could the scroll  
contain the whole,  
Though stretched from  
sky to sky.

1John 2:2, 1John 4:9-10, 1Thess 5:18

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3. God extends His grace to all men - Ro 1:19-20, Ps 19:1-2, 2Ti 3:16-17
4. Remembering to thank God Luke 17:11-19
5. Thank God for His unspeakable gift - Ps 49:6-9, 2Cor 9:13-15