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Little Surprises About Thanksgiving

—Part 1

It won't surprise you to be told that an important part of prayer is thanksgiving. But some of the things that the Bible says about thanksgiving, or the attitude of gratitude are a little bit surprising.

This lesson contains thirteen little surprises about thanksgiving. These won't be world-shattering revelations that toss you into the fifth dimension. They'll be just little surprises, but no less important for that.

Surprise! Thanksgiving is a law of God to obey.

The first surprise (1Thessalonians 5:18) is that giving thanks is not just something sweet to do. It is a precept to obey. "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

We usually think of laws and precepts as being commandments like "do not commit adultery" or "be baptized every one of you". But as you can see, it is also God's will and commandment that we be happy and thankful.

Surprise! Giving up giving thanks can lead to idolatry.

Now comes surprise number two (Romans 1:21-25). "Though they knew God, they did not honour him as God, or give thanks... and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image". Notice how not giving thanks to God led to worshipping "the creature rather than the Creator".

God appeared to Solomon not once but twice, yet Solomon did not maintain his appreciation. He lost his 'gratitude attitude', and so turned to idols (1Kings 11:9-10). Does your heart overflow every day with thanks and praise? If not, your heart is preparing itself for idolatry.

Surprise! A prayer without thanksgiving is defective.

Our next surprise (1Timothy 2:1 Philippians 4:6). is that prayer is not petition alone, but rather "Petitions and thanksgivings". Paul urges us, "in everything by prayer and supplication **with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God".

Effective prayer is not just asking for things. It's also giving thanks for things. Prayer without thanksgiving is rather like junk to God. It's like a chair with one leg missing, or a clock with no hour hand, or a phone in which buttons 8 and 9 don't work.

Surprise! Thanksgiving is a life-pervading principle.

Another surprise (Colossians 3:15-17, Ephesians 5:20) is that thanksgiving is not only for special occasions. "Always giving thanks for all things" is the rule. "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father".

Don't wait for some special blessing before giving thanks. The breath you are taking right now is a blessing enough. Use it to give thanks to God.

Surprise! Thanksgiving is not a trace element.

The sixth surprise (2Corinthians 4:15, 2Corinthians 9:11-12) is that thanksgiving should not only pervade our lives but should abound. "The grace which is being multiplied to many causes giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God."

A trace element pervades the soil but is not there in abundance. Thanksgiving is more like nitrogen in the soil—it needs to be plentiful.

Surprise! Thankful people make others thankful.

The seventh surprise (2Corinthians 4:15, 2Corinthians 9:11-12) is that we should not merely be thankful ourselves, but our lives should be the cause of thanksgiving in others. True thanksgiving is not just something heart-felt and lip-served, but also reflected in the way we live.

We "cause the giving of thanks to abound" in others as well, "producing thanksgiving to God" by our own acts that arise from our gratitude to God. We know how envy, jealousy, pride, and other evil attitudes spread contagiously. Well, good attitudes like thankfulness can do that too, and even overcome evil.

Surprise! Thanksgiving applies to ordinary things.

Surprise eight (1Timothy 4:4-5, Romans 14:6) is that thanksgiving does not have to be something grand and heroic. As we have already seen, it's not just for special occasions. It applies to all the small blessings of life.

A good example of this is our daily food. "He who eats, eats for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God". Certainly we give thanks to God for the sacrifice of Christ and the promise of eternal life through him. But we also give thanks to God for a sandwich.

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