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Little Surprises About Thanksgiving

—Part 2

In this second part, we continue with our thirteen little surprises about thanksgiving. And you may get a bigger surprise than you thought.

Surprise! Thanksgiving counteracts bad language

The ninth surprise (Ephesians 5:4) about thanksgiving is that 'thanksgiving living' is the secret of how to conquer the wayward tongue. "There must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not appropriate, but rather giving of thanks".

Get your lips into the habit of giving thanks, and you get them out of the habit of speaking evil.

Surprise! Thanksgiving is not to God alone.

The tenth surprise (Romans 16:3-4) is that thanksgiving ought to be directed not only toward God but also to others. When Paul and his brethren thanked Priscilla and Aquila, this was just as much an act of Christian thanksgiving as though they had thanked God.

An expression of gratitude, to those who deserve it, makes God just as happy as a prayer of thanks to himself. It's all thanksgiving, and God loves the 'gratitude attitude' when it is shown to others just as when it is shown to him.

Surprise! Thanksgiving is tied to faith.

Surprise number eleven (Colossians 2:6-8) is that being "established in your faith" goes together with "overflowing with gratitude". We cannot be strong and stable in our faith without an abundant attitude of thankfulness.

The 'gratitude attitude' is one of the ways we immunise ourselves against falling from faith and truth into "empty deception".

Surprise! Thanksgiving is tied to grace.

Surprise number twelve (Ephesians 2:5) involves a little Greek lesson. The essence of the gospel is, "By grace you have been saved". The Greek word for grace is *charis* and the Greek word for thanksgiving is *eucharisteo*. You don't have to be a scholar to see the word for grace in the middle of the word for thanksgiving.

Even our English word gratitude is a cousin to the word grace because both words come from the Latin *gratis*. Gratitude is 'grace-itude'. That's why we call the giving of thanks at our meals "saying grace". By seeing the connection between thanksgiving and salvation by grace through faith, we see the great importance of thanksgiving, don't we?

Surprise! Gratitude prevents many problems in life.

The thirteenth surprise (Philippians 4:6-7) about thanksgiving is that the lack of it causes, and the presence of it prevents, many of life's problems. If we want "the peace of God" we have to "rejoice always" and the simplest help for that is to live and pray "with thanksgiving".

A slightly Bigger Surprise About Thanksgiving

You might think that since we've looked at thirteen surprises about thanksgiving, that's the end of the lesson. In that case you'll be surprised to find that we have actually looked at only twelve. We missed the third surprise.

Surprise! Thanksgiving is a gift to God.

In a way, the third surprise (Hebrews 13:15-16) is the most surprising and important little surprise of all. We would be inclined to think of thanksgiving as an acknowledgement of God's gifts to us. That's true of course, but it's also true that thanksgiving is our gift to God. We do call it thanks GIVING after all.

We "offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to his name". We might think that there's not much we can give God, but by offering thanks to God we please him very much.

We also give pleasure to God when we show our gratitude by "doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased".

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you condense the thirteen facts about thanksgiving into a short statement that describes the sort of life and future a person faces who lacks thanksgiving?
2. What sort of problems and difficulties in personal, community, and church life would be greatly lessened if people took these thirteen simple things to heart and lived by them?

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