

Most Thankful For

by

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What are you thankful for? This was often a question asked in my family (as I was growing up) sitting together around the table at Thanksgiving. There is much. I am thankful to be here, with my spiritual family in Christ. I am thankful to see my children growing physically and spiritually. I am thankful to have this moment of your attention to share the hope of God with you.

There are three particularly important things to be thankful for today, this week, and always. God's GRACE, MERCY, and LOVE toward us. Certainly, we have heard of these great elements of which the singular hope of God, for us, consists. Let's consider the importance of God's GRACE; His MERCY; and His LOVE in more detail—as well as how we can be most thankful for them. Let's open the Scriptures together and consider these thoughts.

Thankful for the GRACE of God:

What is God's "GRACE"? In an everyday explanation: GRACE is God giving us what we do not deserve. Many focus God's GRACE on salvation alone when there are many things that are from God's GRACE. Our existence (Psalm 100:1-3; Acts 17:24-27). Our continuation (God sustains us Matthew 5:45, and allows us to remain Matthew 24:36). Our instruction in the will of God (Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Luke calls the gospel "the word of His grace" (Acts 14:3; 20:32). And, certainly, our hope of salvation (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-8; Ephesians 2:8-10).

What is God's GRACE to You and Me? The purpose of GRACE is to offer us the opportunity of relief from our own dilemma. The burden of our sin makes GRACE necessary (Isaiah 59:1-2; 64:6; Romans 3:10, 23; 5:12). Man has no way of freeing himself from his own sin (Romans 5:6). Man requires a way to be reconciled to God (Romans 5:8-10). God extends to us the opportunity of this reconciliation. The Problem: We cannot free ourselves from the bondage of sin and our own way only make it worse (Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23a). His Solution: The Gospel, the word of God (Romans 1:16; Hebrews 1:1-2; Acts 20:24; Philippians 1:7). The Gain of His GRACE is our relief from our sins and our doomed separation from Him and all that is good (Romans 6:23b).

Without God's willingness to offer His GRACE to you and me, we would be hopelessly lost by our own doing. Let's be thankful to God, for His wonderful GRACE.

Thankful for the MERCY of God

What is God's "MERCY"? In an everyday explanation "MERCY" is: God not giving us what we deserve. What does this "deserve" refer to? When we sin, we leave God; the truth; the light—we reject the way of God; and choose the way of the world (James 1:13-15). We transgress God's will (1 John 3:4). We rebel against our Father in Heaven and His righteous instructions (2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:17-25).

What is "MERCY" to You and Me? Again, we begin with the reality that both you and I have in common, we have sinned (Romans 3:23). According to Romans 6:23a, our choice to sin has caused a separation between us and God. Spiritual death immediately, leading to spiritual separation from God eternally (Matthew 7:21-23). This "eternal separation" means everlasting condemnation (Matthew 25:30, 46a; Mark 9:44, 46, 48). Through God's "GRACE", we are offered His plan in which we gain His MERCY —mercy that allows His faithful to avoid this sentence of everlasting condemnation. (It is difficult to define "MERCY" without overlapping "GRACE").

Without God's willingness to offer His MERCY to you and me, we would be hopelessly condemned forever. Let's be thankful to God for His wonderful MERCY.

Thankful for the LOVE of God:

Without the loving capacity of our Creator, we would not be discussing His "GRACE" or His "MERCY" (Ephesians 2:4-10). One of God's great defining qualities is His LOVE (1 John 4:8). Our Covenant relationship with God is because of the LOVE of God. "God is for us" (Romans 8:31-39). "...His great love with which He loved us" (Ephesians 2:1-7). "...who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation..." (2 Thessalonians 2:16). "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). We learn our own capacity to love from God—we are told that every "good and perfect gift" is from God and LOVE is certainly a gift.

What is God's LOVE for You and Me? God created us with a desire for love (Acts 17:27—so that we would seek Him). God, because of His LOVE established, a way through which we can be saved from our sins (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-8). God's LOVE has offered us the direction that can be known no other way (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God's LOVE for us allows Him to perpetuate this world with a desire for our

repentance (2 Peter 3:9)—even this time will run out. In an attempt to describe the LOVE of God, it has been said: God's LOVE is as long as to reach from eternity to eternity. God's LOVE is as deep as to lift us out of the pits of sin. God's LOVE is as tall as carrying us to the heights of Heaven. God's LOVE is as wide as the embrace of all nations everywhere.

Without God's willingness to offer His LOVE to you and me, we would be locked in a loveless situation that leads from daily disappointment to a never-ending day of disaster. Let's be thankful to God for His wonderful LOVE.

Conclusion:

We should be thankful for countless small blessings in our daily lives, but we must not forget the most important blessings from God. There is nothing better than the fact that God "LOVES" us enough to offer His "MERCY" and extends to us His "GRACE".

The GRACE, MERCY, and LOVE of God must be pursued; not just assumed (Acts 17:27). Some are not thankful for the revealed Doctrine of Christ; they want to write their own rules (Matthew 15:8-9). Some are not thankful for God's instructions; they want His blessings on their own terms (Romans 10:1-3). But some willingly, humbly, and fully submit to the word of God; these will know the eternal opportunity of the GRACE, MERCY, and LOVE of God (1 Timothy 4:13, 15-16). We cannot expect God to accept our Thanksgiving to Him while we continue to reject His will.

The way to show our thankfulness to God is to give yourself to the doing of His will (Matthew 7:21)—fully committed; a living sacrifice to Him (Romans 12:1). The opportunity of the greatest blessings from God is yours. Be thankful for this moment, embrace its opportunity, and come to God, right now.