

THANKSGIVING FOR ALL THINGS

Scripture Reading: I Thessalonians 5:18

"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:18). If they are honest, some who read this verse may be thinking, "Are you serious, Lord?" Of course we give thanks for the *good* things that happen to us; but how can we possibly be expected to give thanks for unpleasant things? Two illustrations come to mind.

Job truly suffered the loss of all things in a material sense. His wealth, children, and finally his health were all taken away from him. Yet his response was, "...the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21b). When even his wife advised him to "curse God, and die," Job could respond, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10b). Here was a man who could give thanks in all things because he realized that before God, he deserved nothing at all.

Paul was another man who was called to suffer. He gave up position and power far above his peers in the religious world to follow Christ. Yet having done so, he was beset with a "thorn in the flesh." Could he thank God even for this? Yes, indeed! You see, Paul had the assurance from the Lord that "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Because of this, the humble apostle could cry out, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Corinthians 12:9). We must come to realize that God has a purpose in everything He allows in our lives. Then we can truly give thanks for all things!

Joel Finck

Notes:

PRAYER WITH THANKSGIVING

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:6, 7

Please read Philippians 4:9 *first*, then back track to our text verses. Ever remember, dear Christian, in order for the God OF peace (with whom you are now justified BY faith) to work in your life, you must follow Philippians 4:9!

So as we bow our knees to our heavenly Father, Paul writes, "Be careful for nothing." Don't have a care in the world for anything. Fully 90% of the things we worry about are either over, or we can't influence them anyway; but God wants 100% worry-free Christians in this dispensation of His grace. We read in Ephesians 1:11 that God "worketh ALL THINGS *after the counsel of His own will.*"

Those who keep trying to resurrect Israel's program and promises would have us believe that if enough prayers (prayer circles/chains) on a specific request go up to God, He just *has* to do what is asked. Wait. The "ask and receive" promises don't apply to the Body of Christ. God works all things, in this *evil age*, according to the counsel of His own will. Glory to God! He, who formed the universe by His spoken Word and started time for us, will handle all transactions because He knows the thoughts and intents of our hearts. We can trust Him completely.

Yet, we are so created, that our hearts must speak to our Creator; and God our Father *invites us to speak*. "Let your requests come up to Me freely. Then *rest.*" Let the "peace OF God" rule in your heart knowing that the God of all grace has given us something more than our wants. He gives us what we need and also the peace which passeth understanding. We can then rest in Romans 8:28.

Ralph F. Balog

Notes:

SELF-RIGHTEOUS THANKSGIVING*Scripture Reading: Luke 18:11*

How often have we heard testimonies of faith or prayers to God that sound more like self-praise than praise to God? How often have we taken at least some measure of credit for something that rightfully belongs entirely to God?

Our Lord told a parable to self-righteous listeners about a Pharisee and a tax-gatherer who went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee prayed "with himself," thanking God that he wasn't like other people and that he fasted and paid tithes. The tax-gatherer would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, for he knew he was a sinner and asked mercy from God. The Pharisee stood condemned before God for his self-righteousness while the tax-gatherer stood justified for his humility (Luke 18:9-14).

Brethren, all that we have and need is from God. Apart from God no one is righteous, understands, or seeks after God (Romans 3:10, 11; I Corinthians 2:14). By the grace of God, we are given the faith to reckon ourselves sinners and believe the gospel of our salvation (Ephesians 2:8, 9; II Thessalonians 2:13). Also by the grace of God, we are predestined and called to salvation, justified by the blood of Christ, reconciled to God, sanctified unto God, and glorified (Romans 5:8-10; 8:29, 30; I Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 1:7, 13). We have gone from being dead in sin to being alive in Christ (Romans 6:1-11; Ephesians 2:1-5).

Not only has God done all this for us, but our faith, strength, and understanding also come from God (Romans 12:3; Ephesians 1:17-19; 3:16; Colossians 1:11). God has supplied His Word to us in order that we may understand His will and be equipped for every good work (Ephesians 3:8-10; II Timothy 3:16, 17). God even supplies all our needs (Philippians 4:19). Therefore, there is no room for boasting except in the cross (Romans 3:27; Galatians 6:14).

*Dick Johnson***THANKSGIVING AND RENEWED COURAGE***Scripture Reading: Acts 28:15*

We're often gripped with anxious moments as we face new or different situations. It seems it was no different with Paul. Though he was the great apostle of grace, he evidently had some anxiety or fear of what he faced in Rome. Rather than inventing or enhancing fears, our focus is his response of thankfulness to God for His provision.

Years of trials, travel, and travail led up to this last leg of the journey to Rome. His life literally hung in the balance of the whim of Caesar. Yet during his approach to Rome, God sent brethren, who longed to see him, out to meet him. These were probably some of those mentioned in Paul's letter to the Romans. Though we don't know who or how many came to meet him, Paul was on a first name basis with twenty-four Roman brethren, and acquainted with many more he mentioned in general terms in the closing of that letter. Two that stand out in the list would be Aquila and Priscilla. These two, of kindred spirit with Paul, had previously risked their lives for him (Romans 16:4). What would hold them back at a time like this? Thus, we find Paul thanked God at the very sight of the brethren that met him on the road that day; and he received courage. The word *courage* in the New Testament is used as a noun only here; but as a verb, it is used eight other times. For instance, God gave Paul courage in Acts 23:11 when He assured Paul that he would be going to Rome. This meeting brought him courage.

Just as Paul thanked God for his meeting with brethren, others may be thankful for meeting with you. God can use what we may consider insignificant for His glory.

*Jeff Seekins**Notes:*

GOD'S PROMISE TO ISRAEL & GOD'S PROMISE TO THE BODY OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 8:10-12, Ephesians 1:12-14

Because they were disobedient, Israel has been set aside; and their promised kingdom is held in abeyance. However, God never withdraws a commitment. Though He has temporarily set them aside, Paul the apostle writes, "Hath God cast away His people? God forbid" (Romans 11:1). "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, **cannot disannul, that it should make the Promise of none effect.**" (Galatians 3:17). "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins" (Romans 11:26-27). "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee" (Isaiah 54:7-8).

Because Israel's future has been put on hold, God has ushered in a new dispensation with a different promise. Israel's promise is earthly, but the promise of the present church, the Body of Christ, is heavenly. "For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for [expect] the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4).

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Robert E. Hanna

FORGIVENESS IN THE KINGDOM GOSPEL & FORGIVENESS IN THE GRACE GOSPEL

Scripture Reading: Mark 11:25-26, Ephesians 4:30-32

The power of forgiveness of sin is, and always has been, in God's hands; but He has not always dealt with the process in precisely the same manner. Under the kingdom economy, the stated condition is recorded thusly in the words of Christ to His disciples: "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive your trespasses. **But if Ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses**" (Mark 11:25-26). "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37). When teaching His disciples how to pray, He said, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). The condition is clear: forgive, so that God can forgive you. Such was forgiveness under the kingdom gospel.

We today are not under the kingdom gospel but the Gospel of the Grace of God! Our instruction from the risen Lord Jesus Christ comes to us through the apostle to the Gentiles, by the name of Paul. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, **even as God for Christ's sake HATH FORGIVEN YOU**" (Ephesians 4:32). "In whom [Christ] we have redemption through His blood, **the forgiveness of sins**, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, **having forgiven you all trespasses**" (Colossians 2:13).

Notes:

REH

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE & THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Revelation 20:11, II Corinthians 5:10

Many people—saved people—live in dread of death because they do not understand the kind of judgment that they will face before God. There is indeed a final judgment to come— which is awesome and should strike fear into the heart of those who will face it. The Apostle John wrote, describing what was revealed to him in a vision on the Isle of Patmos, “I saw a great white throne, and Him [Christ] that sat on it... and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life...and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11-15). Those described here are the lost—those who did not accept God’s proffered salvation before they died. The lost from all generations are raised from the dead to face this sentence of eternal separation from God.

But you and I, if we have been saved by the grace of God through faith, are not destined to confront the Great White Throne. Our apostle has revealed that “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ [not the great white throne]; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (II Corinthians 5:10). The works for which we will be judged are those accomplished in service to God during our lives after we have been saved. “If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss [of reward], but he himself shall be saved...” (I Corinthians 3:15).

REH

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THE HOLY SPIRIT AT PENTECOST & THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BODY OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Luke 24:49, I Corinthians 6:19

Following His resurrection from the grave, Jesus said to His apostles, “I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). And just before He ascended into heaven, He reiterated, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts 1:8). True to the promise, on the day of Pentecost “They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues; as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4).

The work of the Holy Spirit was to descend upon the disciples, fill them [control them] and endue them with power, enabling them to perform miraculous acts. This all took place in Jerusalem, involving Jews, in the program of Israel.

The above described activity does not relate to you and me. We live under the Dispensation of the Grace of God, under the Gospel of the Grace of God, according to the mystery which was revealed to and through the Apostle Paul. The Holy Spirit doesn’t empower or control us; He indwells us. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God?” (I Corinthians 6:19)... “[the Holy Spirit] is the earnest [the guarantee] of our inheritance [eternal life in glory] until the redemption of the purchased possession [the rapture]” (Ephesians 1:14).

REH

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