

Dear all, greetings.

We have just celebrated Thanksgiving. Here is a small selection of 6 texts that relate to a spirit of gratitude and what we can learn about the blessings of being thankful:

Text 1. “O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever” (1 Chron. 16:34). The context here is a song of praise by David on the arrival of the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem after many years of wandering among the philistines and certain Israelite compounds. David is celebrating not only the arrival of the ark of the covenant, but more importantly, the visible presence of YHWH in the midst of Jerusalem. He is thankful for YHWH’s real and tangible presence in His community. This leads us to ponder: are we grateful that Jesus is “always with us, even to the end of the age?” Do we carry that sense of gratitude, and accompanying cause for rejoicing in our hearts.

Text 2. “Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things” (Psalm 107:8-9). In this psalm, the psalmist is expressing his gratitude to God for all the ways that God answers the prayers and delivers those who are caught up in the realities of life. The psalmist covers those who are lost in the desert and are hungry and thirsty, who are sick unto death, who are caught in storms at sea in small ships, and who are in prison. In this passage, we are encouraged to be reflect upon, and be grateful for, how God delivers us in the midst of the regular exigencies of life: kidney stones and their removal; flights with terrifying turbulence; and difficult physical conditions. God knows not only our spiritual condition, but also our physical condition, and is with us in the midst of the storms of life.

Text 3. “I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving” (Psalm 69:30). Here we find a messianic psalm that includes many of the experiences that Jesus went through in His passion. Jesus was rejected by those around Him, given vinegar to drink, abused and rejected, and at times senses a gulf of separation from His Heavenly Father. In the midst of rejection, scorn, mockery, false accusations and hatred, the psalmist records a line of praise to God. We can cling to our Heavenly Father, and his unfailing presence and everlasting love, even when the whole world seems to have turned against us. The world is unjust – but God is just. The world hates – but God loves. The world derides – but God encourages Him. And so we can be thankful to Him above all and over all and despite all that is happening around us.

Text 4. “You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us” (2 Corinthians 9:11). In this passage, Paul is appealing to the church of Corinth to join in with the offering for the poor believers in Jerusalem, along with the other newly planted congregations across Asia Minor and Greece. In appealing to the church of Corinth to join in with the collection for this “poor fund,” Paul indicates that through their generosity, not only will they be providing food and other vital supplies for the poor of Jerusalem, but they will be planting the seeds of love that will give rise to a harvest of thankfulness and gratitude among others. By our giving, through our generosity to those who can never be in a position to repay us, we too can plant seeds of love that will develop into a harvest of thankfulness....not to us....but to our Heavenly Father. So, let us plant those seeds of love, trusting the Spirit to bring forward a harvest of righteousness that only He can give.

Text 5. “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7). Here we find a whole new dimension to gratitude. We normally associate gratitude for what God HAS done for us, but here we are commanded not only to present our requests to God but to do with thanksgiving....in advance for what we trust God TO DO for us. Thus, gratitude and thankfulness are not only retroactive, but they also are in anticipation of God’s goodness in our lives. Thus we put our challenges in God’s hands, and instead of rising in the morning with fear or trembling or anxiety in our hearts and minds, we can enter the day with thankfulness and gratitude in our hearts, knowing that He is in control, and that He is working on those very items that were causing us to worry. Thankfulness is thus a prophetic attitude, looking forward by faith to what we cannot yet see with peace in our hearts.

Text 6. “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). What is happening here? Well, Paul is not enjoining gratitude for what God has done, or us sowing seeds of love that lead to gratitude elsewhere. No, Paul is here discussing the fact that in the final analysis, good will triumph over evil. Evil has a limit beyond which it cannot pass, and we can be grateful to God that in the final analysis, evil will finish, evil will come to an end, evil will have its day, and will one day be no more. The Great

Controversy will be over, and love will reign supreme. We live in a world where every human system is flawed, where today's heroes are tomorrow's villains, where justice seems so elusive, where the rich and powerful continually get away with terrible crimes and "justice" is visited on the poor, friendless and "little people," we can have gratitude in our hearts. The Righteous Judge will do away with evil, and justice and love will reign supreme. And if that isn't enough to cause an upsurge of thanksgiving in our hearts, what will?

So, what were you thankful for during Thanksgiving? Whatever any of us were grateful for, let us allow the Word of God to guide us into a deeper and more enriching experience of gratitude and thankfulness today. In the small sample of passages above relating to thankfulness and gratitude, there is a form of gratitude and thankfulness that applies to each and every one of us. In the words of the doxology, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow...."

Kind regards,

Conrad.