

Thanksgiving

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[0 : 00] You will find the words I would like to draw your attention to today in the letter of Paul to the Philippians. Paul's epistle to the Philippians, chapter 4, and just two words in the middle of verse 6.

Philippians 4, verse 6. And these are the words, with thanksgiving. You remember the miracle of the cleansing of the ten lepers by people.

He sent them to the high priest, who was sonically officer, and the spiritual in charge.

And on their way to the high priest to present the offerings required under the law of Moses, they were cleansed. Nine of them went on jubilant, rejoicing in the newfound health and liberty.

So that meant a lot to them. The stigma of leprosy was tough. The limitations of leprosy were no more.

[1 : 27] And so they were glad. And they went on their way, rejoicing, to show themselves to the high priest. But one of them returned.

Before going on to the priest, he returned to Jesus to give God's thanks. The only one out of the ten. The only one out of the ten. The only one out of the ten. And my friends, that's not an uncommon thing.

For gladness and gratitude are not the same thing. We can be glad for some benefit we receive without truly being grateful.

For gratitude is the forgotten exercise. Indeed, thankfulness is the forgotten grace. And our Lord knows the omission.

Today is your Father's Thanksgiving Day. Our Lord's kingdom, our children, He reads two words in our text with thanksgiving.

[2 : 38] For each word reminds us that we ought to give God's thanks and be giving God's thanks continually. Now the first thing I want to notice is that thanksgiving is appropriate at all times.

Thanksgiving is appropriate at all times. Speaking it in the context of a verse before us, superficially, it doesn't seem to be appropriate.

Let me read the whole verse. Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

and the peace of God, and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind through Christ's peace. It seems like with thanksgiving, have just been slipping in yet.

It's a parenthesis. Indeed, we can read the verse, and never notice the omission. Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God.

[3 : 59] Because it's the prayer of a heart that is charred with care. a heart full of unsoignity, and dispoise, and trouble.

And the apostle is showing the way in which we can cure this carefulness. Be not anxious, minding for anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God.

But he asks, or he slips in, with thanksgiving. And there's a good reason for him throwing in the phrase, with thanksgiving.

Because thanksgiving is not inappropriate to a time of supplication and intercession. It helps us to keep things in a true perspective.

So that, in a time of trouble in this way, we ought to be all and more ready to look for the things for which we ought to be thankful. I'll say, him who says, count your blessings, name them one by one, and it shall surprise you what the Lord has done.

[5 : 23] For in times of trouble, we are to opt to think that there is nothing left. and we are sorry for ourselves. And we moan and bemoan and we say, I am the man who has seen affliction, who has felt the wrong of his loss.

Jacob felt that he had been stripped of everything. when his son came home from Egypt and said to him, the ruler of Egypt was very harsh. He is demanded that you will send Benjamin with us again. He set Simeon bound. And unless you send Benjamin, we will get nothing more from him. Jacob said, me have the verierend of all my children.

Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now you will take Benjamin away. All these things are against you. Luke said, he had nothing left.

And yet, Jacob proved in the long run that all these things were in his interest. But the loss of Joseph and the temporary loss of Simeon and the demand for Benjamin were all in the plans to restore his whole family to him, yes, and to provide for his tribe in the time of time.

[6 : 45] Even Job had something to be thankful for. Although he found it difficult, indeed, to find at times, he still had God.

There was an old daily man, a Christian daily man, a very poor man, that he had one thing to say to people he met in times of trouble or to spread. He's over here.

There's no doubt who he met by heat. He's over here. In Browning, say, poem, Little Pippa, the mill girl, who had only one holiday of the year, went singing, on that day, God's in his heaven, all's right to the world.

God's in his heaven, that is true. Well, that may be a sinful, naive philosophy, and be dismissed by those who think more profoundly, and yet, she had far more right in her sinful philosophy than the cynic or the evil.

God's in his heaven, that is true. There are things that we cannot explain and cannot understand, and that those times we must be still and know that he is God, but my friends, he is God, and he is there, and he is not silent, and he is not inactive.

[8 : 15] The apocryphes, in all things, gives thanks. Not just the situations in which we find ourselves that are comfortable, and heartwarming, and glad.

These are the situations that really call for gratitude, praise, and praise, then, the song of praise who dwell up in our hearts and overflowed into our lives.

But in all things, the apocryphes, in all things, gives thanks. There was a Christian, and he rather irritated his fellow believers because no matter what situation they found themselves in, of what their constraints might be, he would always say it might have been worse.

And I have superleaved with those who felt irritated by such a thing, such a statement, it might have been worse. And one day, a friend of his thought he would silence him.

It was not a dream he had. You know, he says, last night, I had a terrible dream. It was really a terrible dream. I dreamt that I was in hell. And his friend replied, it might have been worse.

[9 : 54] What could be worse than that, of dreaming, that you were in hell? And when his friend replied, you might have been there in real life. Well, leaving that aside, there is no time but is appropriate for Thanksgiving, even bad times.

I think the greatest example of that is in the chapter we read in Habakkuk. No doubt, as I was reading, you were thinking, well, there are lots of things in that chapter that we don't understand. I'm not sure that the prophets understood either. But there's one thing that we can understand. The final verses where the prophets paint their most decilates of pictures.

A complete decilates. Although the sphinctry shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labourer of the olive shall tame.

And these were the three that provided the staple of food for the people, the fish, the grapevines, the olive. And the field shall yield no meat, no corn, no meal, no bread.

[11 : 25] The flock shall be cut off from a foal and there shall be no herd in the stall, no cattle, either sheep or cows.

Can you picture, can you paint a more definite picture than that? And remember that you're dealing with a community completely dependent on itself.

food? They couldn't go to the store and get the packets of food or thin food to substitute on.

No, they were dependent of what their own fields produce. food. Well, what do we do in a time like that? Although the sphinctry shall not blossom, neither shall tooth be in the vine.

The labour of the olive shall fail and the field shall yield no meat. The flock shall be cut off from the fold and the herds in the stall. Yet, listen, yet, I will rejoice in the Lord.

[12 : 34] I will join in the God of my salvation. I will rejoice in the Lord. No, not just resignation. Not just the saying, ah well, if the Lord's will then we must bail.

Christian resignation. No, it's not flowerless weed.

It is joy of the flowering kind that's when I spoke to you. I will rejoice in the Lord. It's even stronger than our salvation. I will dance for joy in the God of my salvation.

Why? You see, the prophet still has God. And even though he had nothing else, he had God.

And my friends, no matter how distressed full times may become, no matter how our own personal, how bleak our own personal experience may be, there is still God.

[13:47] God's in his heaven. The God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Father of mercy, the God of all grace, through the Holy One of Israel, through the God of judgment, because he is a righteous God.

But the God who is slow to anger, and plenty is in rest. The prophet still has God.

And we too have God, no matter how wrong things may be. God. There is even, if one might say, there was difficult to say, a better reason than this.

It's not just that these things are against us, or seem to be against us, or that they are lots of what we must put up with, and take it as part of the kukenow law, as good Thomas Boston would put it. But, listen, all these things work together for the good of God's people. Or rather, God makes all these things work together for good, so them that love him, who are called according to his purpose.

[15:16] Nothing can befall the child of God but what is for his good. The chastisement which for the present is not joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterwards yields peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised by.

It's chastisement, which means it's disciplined. It's not punishment in the real sense of that word. Whom the Lord loves and chastis and scourges every son whom he receives.

Ploughing and harrowing are necessary to cultivate the land for a crop and as the Samuel Rutherford says, if the Lord ploughs upon your back, remember that he purposes at cross.

He purposes at cross. The story might express it slightly differently in the words of the hymn, addressed to such a situation as this, ye saints of God fresh courage take, the clouds you so much dread, they are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head.

Those dark clouds, clouds that contain the refreshing, life-giving way, break with mercy, and shall break with blessings on your head.

[16:53] And so, in times of care and anxiety, be careful for nothing, but that everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving.

Don't omit that, or your peace will not be what it offers. With thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Now, the second thing I want us to notice are the things that call for gratitude. The things that call for our thanksgiving. For one thing, there are temporal benefits.

In a psalm we were singing last, the psalmist says to his soul, forget not all his benefits, and more especially, those benefits which come regularly and frequently.

Of course, there are special benefits. They come by way of bonus, so to speak. And they may call for a burst of praise, but we tend to forget those benefits that come regularly, every day.

[18:18] Oh yes, we do say grace before meals, we do thanks, but too often, our thanks are poverty.

Our grace is a matter of routine, and how ashamed we are if we would face the truth, we do not feel grateful. We take it all for granted, and yet if we realize, we have no natural right to any of these things.

A drop of cold water is too good for those who have sinned against God and forfeited all claims on these things by life.

Some of those who are suffering salvation in Uganda, some of those Christians there, would feel that a spoonful or two of rice was a great, great mercy.

my friends, let's not forget the benefits that come regularly, for we do not go hungry, no matter what the recession in the land is, and the depression, and the unemployment, so far we have not gone hungry, as many do in the third world today.

[19:48] So too for our health. How many are grateful that they are free from pain, that they can get a good night's rest? We take it for granted.

It's only when these things are taken from us that we realise the utter blessing of being able to walk on your two legs and move about freely, and not have continually resorting to the aspirin bottle, or perhaps even some more potent rights.

And again, domestic quiet and peace, or just national security and justice in a world that's full of injustice and violence and so on.

In the city, with its urban government, government, we consider ourselves zero. We talk about inflation, that there are countries in the world today in which, to which Britain seems to be a wealthy land, with real security.

and there are other benefits. When we give thanks, let's see that we give thanks not only for our food, for man shall not live by bread only.

[21 : 24] Man has not only got a body, like a beast, to be fed with food, but he's got a mind, and a soul, a mind to be educated.

And in spite of the growing secularization of education today, we still have a great deal to give God thanks for, and to give God thanks for Christian teachers.

And then, for the Church of Christ in our land, that seems a tight thing, doesn't it? Oh, we bemoan, the declenches, the falling away.

What grieves me every Sunday morning as I go out to Livingstone to take the service there, is passing nearby Inglesstone, where the side of the road is taken up, huddled up with cars and buses, and people are pouring into the fields, there to get a bargain, with so many pennies knocked off, the goods that are sold there on a Sunday, with Sunday moth, and thousands of hens.

And you see, but a handful going near the church. And we deplore the decadence of our days. But do we ever think that there are thousands of real Christians in this country today?

[23 : 08] In places perhaps where we might not expect. Don't forget, there were saints in Caesar's household, and there was good God-fearing of Adiah in the palace of Abraham and Jehovah.

We're too up to fall into the mistake of Elijah and say, I, even I, only am there. God reminded him there were seven thousand leaves in Israel that had not bowed to Baal.

And so let us give God thanks for his people, for the remnant according to the election of grace, and pray that that remnant may be a nucleus, not just a rump that are those that are left dwindling every year, but a nucleus of a growing number, of a body that no man can number, of every tribe and kindred and nation and people, of those who fear the Lord.

For the time is coming when every knee shall bow to God and every tongue shall confess to him.

They shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus didn't tell us to pray, thy kingdom come in vain. He doesn't ask us to whistle in the dark just to keep our courage up. When he says, pray, after this manner, pray ye, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, hallowed be thy name, he encourages us to believe that the time is coming when this will be free.

[24 : 46] yes, there is a glorious future time coming when the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the face of the earth as the waters cover the sea.

And while we think of that, when we give thanks, above all, let us give thanks to God for his gift beyond worth.

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. For the gospel of Christ, or rather for the Christ of the gospel. For it's not a thing that God has given to us, he has given to us his son.

God has given to us his son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? For unless we have Christ, we have nothing. Not even the blessings of this life, they just are flitting ephemeral things, like a butterfly that flit about in the warm days of summer and when the winter comes, they're gone.

So that unless we have Christ, there's a worm at the core of our joy. There is death in every part. Christ, then we have everything.

[26 : 18] It was the poor highland Christian woman who was sitting down to a meal of I think she just had potatoes. And she said, in her grace, all this and Christ too.

There wasn't much in all death. Kind of bleep, insipid sort of dinner. But it was Christ too that made the difference.

Heaven above is bright of blue, earth beneath is sweeter green, something lives in every few, Christless eyes have never seen. Yet, it's the possession of Christ that transforms the common things of this life and makes them unconsive.

And my friends, it's the reception of Christ into our hearts that fills our hearts with praise and gladness and makes thanksgiving really possible.

Forget not all his benefits. It's a man who enjoys the gift, who ready, can give God thanks. Now, very briefly, and in just in two or three words, how we should express our thanksgiving?

[27 : 43] Well, to God, we ought to express it with heart and voice, not just with the lips. The music that God listens to is the music made in the heart.

Now, my friend, my friend, are we thankless because we lack gladness? And do we lack gladness because we have so little say?

Do we look at these things, the things of Christ, the things of the gospel? Do we look at them as through a plate-glass window and see them there?

That's a shock without ever being partakers of them ourselves. It's only as we appropriate the gift of God that we can have the grace of God to give him thanks with heart and voice.

But not only so, while we thank God for his goodness, we should express it as the apostle told the Corinthian believers, we should express it in giving to those who love.

[28 : 59] Ours should never be a dry thanksgiving, but it should be practical. Way back after the Jews had returned from Babylon in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, there was a gathering of the people in Jerusalem.

The law was read and the people realised just how far they had come short of God's glory, how they had sinned, and the people were full of repentance, and they were weeping and wailing.

And the leaders sent among them saying, more not nor weep, this day is a day of gladness. Eat the farts and drink the sweets, and send forcens to those for whom nothing is prepared.

There it is. Send forcens to those for whom nothing is prepared. I like the chapter in the Corinthians we read, where the apostle speaks about the abundance of the joy of the Christians in Macedonia and their deep poverty.

He brings abundance and poverty together. There was poverty of goods, there was abundance of joy. And later on in the chapter he brings poverty and abundance again.

[30 : 16] This time it's the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though rich, yet for your sake he became poor. His poverty, that he through his poverty might be rich.

Your riches, your wealth, they're linked together. Let's see that we give God thanks by contributing to the necessity of the saints, according to his word.

With thanksgiving. Let us pray. to God.

Lord our God, forgive us. Forgive us that we have been so richly endowed in this country that we lack no good thing, however many things there be that we would like to have.

That thou hast not withheld from us any good thing, for thou would not withhold any good thing from those who trust in thee, who walk in the way of thy commandments, and serve thee to all well-treated.

[31 : 29] Forgive us, O Lord, that we have been so ungrateful in heart. Forgive us that we have thought that we had a right and claim to the things we enjoy.

Give us to realize that these things are all of grace. Forgive us that we have been so slow to appropriate thy gifts to us that we might receive, to seek that we may find to knock on the door that thou art so ready to open to us.

Help us enter in to the inheritance of thy people. Help us receive from thine hands more.

But above all, above all we pray that with all thy givings we may not be without that gift beyond words. The gift of thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, as a Saviour of sinners.

The gift of Christ as the bread of life that came down from heaven to give life into the world. The gift of Christ as a water of life to quench the deepest thirst that arises in the human heart.

[32 : 43] The gift of Christ as a great shepherd of the sheep. The gift of Christ as a door for which we must enter into fellowship with thee.

O Lord, our God, may we receive in the arms of our faith the gift of Jesus Christ and the gospel of his grace. And with that we see thee, our heart shall surely go up in gratitude, in love, and in praise. Amen.