

Offering God Thanksgiving

O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy (Psalm 107:1-2)

1. The importance that the Bible places on giving thanks to God

a. Though we hear very little teaching on the subject of giving thanks in most Christian circles, the Bible is full of exhortations, examples, and teachings concerning this very important aspect of our devotional Christian life.

b. Moses first began to teach this principle to the children of Israel (Lev. 7:12-15). Most significant is Moses statement that offering thanksgiving to God be not forced but should be of our own volition: *“And when ye will offer a **sacrifice** of thanksgiving unto the LORD, **offer it at your own will.**”* (Lev. 22:29). Out of a spirit of gratitude, you and I should be **willing** to give God thanks for His undeserved faithfulness towards us. Leviticus also teaches us that thanksgiving is a **sacrifice**. We often must give God thanks independent of feelings and circumstances (see also Ps. 107:22 and 69:30-31).

c. The Psalms are full of encouragements to give thanks to the Lord. As one reads through the Psalms they will see that thanksgiving was a very vital and important element of worship among the Israelites (Ps. 100:4).

d. The New Testament is also very strong in teaching this important principle. Our Lord Jesus the Messiah exemplified this in His prayers to the Father (Matt. 11:25; John 11:39-44). Paul constantly offered thanks unto God on behalf of the people he ministered to (1 Cor. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:13; Col. 1:12, etc.) and taught those he ministered to to give thanks unto God as well (Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18). Paul taught that this is a vital part of our prayer life (1 Tim. 2:1; Phil. 4:6)

e. F. E. Marsh: *“Among the many things that gave strength and beauty to the Temple built by Solomon were the two magnificent pillars called ‘Jachin’ and ‘Boaz.’ These names are suggestive; the former means, ‘He will establish,’ and the latter, ‘In Him is strength.’ As these two pillars were for strength and beauty, so there are two that give power and ornament to the temple of our being, and these are thankfulness and prayerfulness. And as the two leading thoughts in the meaning of the names are strength and stability, so, confiding in God by prayer, we shall be strong in Him; and consecrated to God we shall truly express our thanks to Him, for thanksgiving cannot be severed from thanksgiving, and these characterizing us denote stability.”* (From **Practical Truths From First Thessalonians** by F.E. Marsh).

2. Thanksgiving is an expression of our gratitude to God for what He has done

a. Luke 17:12-19 - Jesus was strongly disappointed that only one out of nine lepers came back to give thanks for their healing. Jesus was quite perplexed with such a lack of gratitude.

b. Rom. 1:18-21 - Part of the reason for the wrath of God coming upon some were due to their lack of thanksgiving. A lack of gratitude to God for His goodness expresses ingratitude and usually leads to other sins.

c. 1 Tim. 4:3-4 (also see Ex. 23:25-26) - This is why it is necessary for us to give

thanksgiving for our food, otherwise known as “saying grace.” The same Greek word for “thanks” used in 1 Cor. 15:57 is translated as “grace” in 1 Thess. 1:1. Whether we use the term “grace” or “thanks” as we pray over our food is not the point but the fact that we have acknowledged God as our provider (Gen. 22; Phil. 4:19). This should not be just a tradition to us but we should show gratitude to God before every meal. It is God who gives us life and health and has provided us with jobs so that we can make money and bring home food.

d. The only person who should not be able to render thanks to God is the one already in the grave (Psalm. 6:5).

3. Thanksgiving is an expression of our faith

a. *But **thanks** be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* (1 Cor. 15:57-58)

b. John 11:39-44 - Jesus offered thanks to God even BEFORE He saw the physical answer to His prayer to the Father. Jesus is our example of how we demonstrate our faith to God. We are to thank God before we see the answer to our prayer (Mark 11:24). That is why thanksgiving is to be included in our prayers and supplications (Phil. 4:6).

c. S. D. Gordon describes the principle of thanksgiving as a “thanks knot.” He believed that by offering thanks to God in faith, this “tied” the Lord to our prayer and in a sense obligated Him to answer it. As he states, “Let us yield to his gracious movings. Then he will lead us to do some knotting, too. For that “thanks” knot is irresistible. It knots Jesus to our prayer. The results are already settled, and in due course will be seen, and felt, and sung over.” (**How To Pray** by S.D. Gordon)

d. R.A. Torrey: “Returning thanks for blessings already received increases our faith and enables us to approach God with new boldness and new assurance. Doubtless the reason so many have so little faith when they pray, is because they take so little time to meditate upon and thank God for blessings already received. As one meditates upon the answers to prayers already granted, faith waxes bolder and bolder, and we come to feel in the very depths of our souls that there is nothing too hard for the Lord.” (From **How To Pray** by R.A. Torrey)

e. Theodore H. Epp: “Many keep praying and asking and then wonder why there is no answer. One reason may be that they have not shown that they believe God will really answer. If they had such faith, they would thank God for the answer, even at the time of prayer. The Bible says, ‘Watch and pray’ (Matt. 26:41, KJV), not ‘Pray and wonder if He will answer.’ We are to watch Him answer.

“Thankful prayer is not wishful praying. We would hardly thank God for something we are only wishing for, but if we are convinced that it is God’s will to answer, it shows faith and expectancy of heart to thank Him for the answer even when we pray for it.” (From **Christ Preeminent** by Theodore H. Epp)

4. Though we must always thank God in the midst of negative circumstances, we do not submit to **fatalism**.

a. Some have misinterpreted some of the “thanksgiving” passages to imply that since all

things (good and evil) come from the hand of God, or that He is somehow in them as they are supposedly a part of His plan, that we are to thank Him for them. This doctrine teaches us that sickness, disease, tragedy, and other negatives in life are the result of God's sovereign will and are supposed to be for our good or teach us some lesson. This teaching is erroneous, unbiblical, and is a misinterpretation of certain Scripture passages.

b. In 1894, Charles Cuthbert Hall wrote this: "Out of a desire, doubtless, to proclaim the sovereignty of God over His creatures, and to recognize after some fashion His hand in all the events of life, a fearful perversion of God's true relation to human suffering, loss, sickness, and death has spread like an untimely frost over the minds of men, whereby all of these evils that so abound in our time are described as dealings of God's will with the children of men.

... If I believed that God spreads scarlet fever among little children; if I believed that God sweeps off into their graves so many young wives and mothers; if I believed that God produces idiots, or drives people mad, or makes men murder and steal and blast their families, I would hate Him as other men hate Him ... But I believe none of this." (From **Does God Send Trouble?** By Charles Cuthbert Hall)

c. One of the passages used to teach this error is Eph. 5:20. However, keeping this in context we will see a different point of view:

*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; **Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;** Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. (Eph. 5:18-22)*

Within the context of this passage we can see that what is being taught here is how we are to act as a result of being filled with the Spirit. Furthermore, this passage is teaching us to thank God for all things that He has given. It is not to thank Him for that which is not from Him. Within the context of this passage the wife is told to submit to her own husband as unto the Lord. Would the wife thank the husband for giving her sickness, disease, beatings, killing a family member dear to her, or any of the myriad of other things that some religious people have taught we are to do?

If we apply this in the way that we have been traditionally taught then should we thank God every time someone commits adultery? Should we thank God when we or someone else commits some other horrible sin that is not pleasing to God? God forbid!!! Nonetheless, taking the traditional Calvinistic interpretation to its logical conclusion would lead us down this path. These things are not in line with God's will and we are not to thank God FOR them. Neither should we thank God FOR other evils that may occur in our lives.

We do not thank God for EVERYTHING as if He were the one bringing them upon us. God has works (John 14:10-12) and Satan also has works (1 John 3:8) and the Bible clearly distinguishes between the two. We must not thank God for the devil's works and we must keep this passage in context as to what it is truly teaching, which is to give thanks to God for all that He has done and is doing. Do not submit to the works of the devil and thank God for them but do as Paul taught earlier in this epistle which is to give no place to him or his works (Eph. 4:27). We are also told in other places to resist the devil and not to submit to his works as though God has ordained them for some mysterious purpose (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Nevertheless, to be thankful to God even *in the midst of trials* (not *because* of the trials) is a powerful weapon against the devil (1 Cor. 15:57). God is able to change any circumstance brought by the devil as we trust Him (Ps. 91:15-16; Rom. 8:28). As the late Theodore Epp taught concerning this same passage, “Make it a practice to thank the Lord for everything. This is a sure way of victory over the devil because he fears a thankful Christian. Thanksgiving is also an expression of our faith; if we believe what God says, we will be thankful for His Word, and this will express our faith to others. When the Lord has revealed that it is His will to do a particular thing, let us thank Him ahead of time for the victory that will be eventually won. This is an expression of our faith in God.” (From **Living Abundantly: Studies In Ephesians** by Theodore Epp)

Epp did not teach fatalism but instead he taught us warfare. We are not to thank God for the devil’s works but even when we are under attack by the devil we are still to offer God’s thanks because we trust Him for deliverance. 1 Thess. 5:18 expresses this thought better: “***In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.***” (1 Thess. 5:18). So a better way for expressing this is to give God thanks **IN** everything and rest in the assurance that Christ has already purchased the victory through His shed blood (Rev. 12:10-11)

(**Note:** Dr. Frederick K.C. Price has an excellent teaching on this subject concerning thanksgiving and fatalism in his book, **Beware! The Lies of Satan**. See the chapter *Lie 6: Thank God For Everything No Matter What*).