

The Old Paths

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“Thanksgiving”

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On November 28th, we celebrated the national holiday of Thanksgiving. Observing this civil holiday is certainly acceptable with God. In fact, the word “thanksgiving” itself is found some twenty-eight times in the Bible from Old to New Testaments. Mr. Webster defines “thanksgiving” as: “1. the act of giving thanks; grateful acknowledgement of benefits or favors, esp. to God. 2. an expression of thanks, esp. to God. 3. a public celebration in acknowledgement of divine favor or kindness. 4. a day set apart for giving thanks to God. 5. (cap.) U.S. see Thanksgiving Day.” Thanksgiving Day: “1. (in the United States) a national holiday for giving thanks to God, now observed on the fourth Thursday of November. 2. (in Canada) a national holiday for giving thanks to God, observed on the second Monday of October.”

Did you notice a consistent thought in each of these definitions? Each definition made reference to God! Our Founding Fathers realized that we needed to show gratitude to God for His many blessings. Therefore, a special day was set aside in this country (and in Canada, according to the dictionary) for giving thanks to God.

While it is good that we live in a nation which was founded upon the principles of godliness and thanking God for the bounty; we must also understand that

“thanksgiving” is not simply a one-time-a-year, nor a one-day thing! Thanksgiving to God needs to be a way of life. Paul said, “*In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you*” (I Thess. 5:18). Those in Ephesus were given similar instructions about giving thanks to God. “*Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Eph. 5:20) Let us learn the lesson and think about our gratitude toward God and see how we measure up in light of the Scriptures.

We Need To Give God Thanks For Our Physical Blessings.

In Acts 17:24-28, Paul makes it clear that God created and sustains us. God “*made the world and all things therein.*” He “*giveth to all life, and breath, and all things For in him we live, and move, and have our being.*” Have we thanked God lately? In Revelation 7:12, we read of the heavenly hosts around the throne, praising God and saying, “*Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*” What beautiful words and thoughts. If we see those around the throne thanking God, can we do any less? Looking around us and comprehending the beauty God has given us ought to make us thankful to God!

Once we understand that we can do nothing for (or by) ourselves, we will be thankful to God as well! David said, “*I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD: That I may publish*

with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works” (Ps. 26:6-7). Later on, we read, “*It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High*” (Ps. 92:1). Are you willing to thank God for physical things? To “tell of His wonderful works”? Paul wrote: “*Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God*” (II Cor. 9:11-12).

For what should we be thankful? Let us be found thanking God for our food (Mk. 8:1-9; I Tim. 4:1-5); our life, strength, and health (Acts 17:28); our marriage, if we are married (This is a physical blessing from God, Matt. 22:30); and our children (Ps. 127:3). These are but a few of the blessings we enjoy in this life! Are we thankful to God for these things?

We Need To Give God Thanks For Our Spiritual Blessings.

When reading the Bible, we see that gratitude for spiritual blessings is an overwhelming theme! We need to take note of the gratitude shown toward God by various ones and make it our own! David was grateful for such spiritual blessings as: the coming Lord, God’s holiness, God Himself, and God’s mercy (Ps. 110:4, 30:4, 12, 106:1; I Chron. 16:4, 7). Paul showed gratitude for: God Himself, being a partaker of God’s inheritance, the brethren he knew, for God’s “*unspeakable gift,*” those who received the truth, and for being put “*into the ministry*” (Col. 1:3, 12; Rom. 1:8, 16:1-4; II Cor. 9:15; I Thess. 2:13; I Tim. 1:12). Jesus thanked God for things on numerous occasions as well. One such time was when He “gave

thanks” in instituting the Lord’s Supper, which to Christians is a spiritual blessing! (Matt. 26:26-27). Righteous Anna gave thanks for the spiritual blessing that is Jesus Christ, for He brought salvation to all men (Lk. 2:36-38)! Daniel is another example of one who was thankful for spiritual blessings. In Daniel 2:20-23, we find him thanking God that he had the ability to discern and explain Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.

How grateful are we for the spiritual blessings we enjoy in Christ (Eph. 1:3)? Truly, the spiritual blessings belonging to the children of God are many!

The Result Of Ingratitude.

Gratitude toward God is not an option! We are commanded and expected to thank God for what He has done and given to us (I Thess. 5:18; Col. 3:15). When people have the attitude that gratitude is an option, they soon stop being as thankful to God as they once were. In fact, ingratitude is so common these days that some seem to think that they are OWED certain things merely by virtue of their being alive! **NOT SO!!!**

What is the result of ingratitude? Some believe there are no consequences to suffer for ingratitude. This is wrong. The result of ingratitude is seen in Romans 1:18-32. Why is it that God “gave them (the Gentiles, JJ) up (over, NAS)” to uncleanness, vile passions, and a reprobate mind? For the reasons found in Romans 1:21: “*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful*”!!!

To keep God from giving us up, and to prevent us from ultimately being the kind of people who do “*not like to retain God in (our) knowledge*”; let us be thankful and praise God now for everything He has provided for us!

Have we ever stopped to offer a prayer of thanks to God for the blessings He showers upon us (physically and spiritually) daily? Friend, why not pray a prayer like that today?

Some Questions About Gratitude Answered In The Bible.

1. “**To whom** are we to be thankful?” We must be thankful to God (II Cor. 4:15). Paul said, “*But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (I Cor. 15:57).

2. “**To what extent** are we to be grateful?” “*...abounding therein with thanksgiving*” (Col. 2:7). The word “abounding” means, “*to superabound (in quantity or quality), be in excess; also (trans.) to cause to superabound or excel:--be the better, enough and to spare, exceed, excel, increase, redound, remain (over and above)*” (Strong’s).

3. “**What should our attitude** be toward gratitude?” Our attitude should be one of sacrifice. David said, “*I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD*” (Ps. 116:17). The Holy Spirit called it the “*sacrifice of praise*” in Hebrews 13:15.

4. “**How widespread** should our gratitude be?” Paul said, “*I exhort therefore, that, ... supplications,*

*prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for **all men**; For kings, and for **all that are in authority** ” (I Tim. 2:1-2).*

Conclusion

How grateful are we to God? After considering all the blessings we enjoy in this life, how grateful we ought to be to God! Gratitude is not a one-time thing, it is not a once-a-year thing, but a life-long thing!! Are we fulfilling that obligation? When so many refuse to show gratitude toward men whom they have seen, how can we expect people to be grateful to God whom they have not seen?

When thinking of gratitude, my mind goes to the occasion when Christ healed the ten lepers, and upon one returning to thank the Lord, Jesus asks: “*Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?*” (Lk. 17:17). For those who are Christians, Christ has cleansed us from far worse than leprosy. Have we thanked Him for His sacrifice lately? Have we thanked God for sending His Son to die for us lately?

The words coming from our mouths ought not be “*filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks*” (Eph. 5:4). Let us pray that God will forgive us of our ingratitude, and may we determine today to show our gratitude to God on a daily basis!

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