

MANY THANKSGIVINGS TO GOD

Philippians 4:1-23

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¹Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. ²I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. ³And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. ⁶Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. ⁹Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. ¹⁰But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. ¹¹Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. ¹²I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. ¹⁴Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. ¹⁵Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. ¹⁶For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. ¹⁷Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. ¹⁸But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. ¹⁹But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. ²⁰Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. ²¹Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. ²²All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. ²³The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Thanksgiving is a time set aside in our country to acknowledge God, Who is the source of all our blessings and prosperity. We are grateful to God from Whom all blessings flow.

There are a few things that are especially important and wonderful to constantly be giving thanks to God for:

1. The love of God, our salvation in Jesus Christ, our Lord, and eternal life.
2. Our families, those who love us, our wives, children and grandchildren.
3. God's abundant provision of the necessities of life: food, clothing and shelter.
4. A divine purpose of life with a challenge in God's cause that is larger than life. A real reason to live!

Paul was grateful for God and the people God had surrounded him with that were a personal encouragement to him in the ministry. God had given him a partnership with them in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He recognized the greatness of some very special friends, that each one had been placed in his life by God. He couldn't have done the work of God without them.

We will look at three attitudes and things we must do to fill our hearts with gratitude and give us a positive outlook in times of hardship.

- I. Thanksgiving and prayer, vs. 1-5
- II. Thanksgiving and a sound mind, vs. 8,9
- III. Thanksgiving and God's provision, vs. 10-20

I. Thanksgiving and prayer, vs. 1-5

He makes mention by name of the people in the Church at Philippi who had been foundational to the success of the Church.

“¹ Therefore my beloved brethren who I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way, stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. ² I urge Euodias and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord, indeed true companions. ³ I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the Gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are

in the Book of Life. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord and again I say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentle spirit be known to all men.”

These were his friends who had shared in the struggles of the ministry for the cause of evangelism. Paul had led them to Christ. They were going to Heaven. They were going to be his Crown up there. He loved these wonderful people. He encouraged others in the Church to encourage those who served faithfully.

It is easy for people to overlook those who serve them in the Church and forget they are human, needing encouragement.

The word shared means a partnership. The Church is a community of believers who see clearly the mission of saving souls who have made a commitment to it, and to be partners together to accomplish it. They are very special people who are foundational to the Church and its success in Kingdom ministry.

Two of them were not getting along, who had lost their joy and had allowed bitterness to get into their hearts. It was a threat and danger to the unity in the Church. Paul tells them to get their joy back and to be gentle with each other in settling their differences. “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.”

It is obvious to all in the character of these kind of people, devoted to the Lord’s service, their “names are written in the Book of Life”. He encourages them to stay the course, don’t get discouraged and fall away from God’s work.

The answer to our hardships, worry and fears in our fight to survive is in prayer with thanksgiving.

“⁶ Be anxious for nothing (don’t worry) but in everything by prayer and supplication (requests) with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God ⁷ and the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Wherever there is true, humble prayer in pouring out our thoughts to God with our needs and hardships, there will always be thanksgiving for what God is going to do in answer to our prayers. Worry about nothing, pray about everything.

How can we give thanks and come before God in gratitude for something He has not answered yet? We still are in a battle to survive and our problems have not gone away yet.

What is God saying? Don't ask "why?" or get frustrated and angry with God. He is saying, "I am in control of your life", and "trust Me with a thankful heart."

God's got it all worked out in advance. Providence comes from two words. Pro means before, and video meaning to see.

God will see to it before it all happens that you will be taken care of. Thank Him for it. His hand is ruling and overruling over all that comes our way with a wonderful outcome for our good and His glory. It's going to be O.K.

Paul was in prison chains between two guards. He had great needs and the fear of being executed any day - thrown to the lions. God was going to take care of him, and Paul, in confidence gave thanks to God.

It is when we pray with many thanksgivings to God that we experience God's peace. It is beyond anything we could ever imagine.

God's peace stands in guard of our minds and gives us mental stability, when otherwise we could crack under the pressure.

Guard is a military term which guarantees our protection from the fear of what we are facing. When we pray with thanksgiving, God will guard our minds with His peace. We know we will get through it all.

II. Thanksgiving and a sound mind, vs. 8,9

"⁸ Finally brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there be any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.⁹ The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

Our minds and what we think about... what we put into them is going to be what comes out of them. We are not usually who we think we are, but what we think is who we will become.

It is in the mind of a human being and what we do with our thoughts that develops into the person we will become and what will become of us before God. It is in the mind where

our disposition and attitudes are formed: our feelings about the world and the choices we will make.

If our thoughts are trained and disciplined to dwell on good things before God, we will experience the peace of God. We will be whole and healthy on the inside, with a sense of well-being. We will be constantly thankful to God for His faithfulness and goodness in our lives.

--- Think about things that are true.

Is there any truth in what you are telling yourself, in what you are believing? Are we trusting in the Word of God for direction in our lives, our moral compass? We need to guard our minds against Satan's lies.

--- Think about the things that are honorable.

These are thoughts that are worthy of respect; honorable ambitions. We are to guard our minds against thoughts that would bring disrespect upon ourselves and shame upon others.

--- Think about things that are right.

We can't be thinking wrong thoughts and putting evil things into our minds.

--- Think what is pure.

Holy, sacred, morally sound.

--- Think about what is lovely.

Whatever is beautiful, good, wholesome and positive.

--- Whatever is of good reputation.

Things the world regards as kindness, courtesy and being respectful of others.

--- If there be anything of excellence and praiseworthy, dwell on these thoughts.

Right thinking and right living will bring us peace of mind and a thankful heart for what we have been given in Jesus Christ.

III. Thanksgiving and God's provision, vs. 10-20

“¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me, indeed you were concerned before but you lacked opportunity.”

Paul had led these people to Christ at Philippi. He had been away for many years and they had lost track of him. He is writing a thank you letter for their financial support of him in the ministry. He is actually more grateful for their care for him than the money.

Paul was in prison in Rome, chained between two guards for the Gospel's sake. He needed to know he was loved. The timing couldn't have been better. It let him know that God's hand was in his life just at the right time. God had put a concern for Paul in the Church to find him and help.

Wow! This is how God works!

He never worked the crowd for money. He didn't have his hands in people's pockets.

“¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned to be content in whatsoever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Paul is going to talk about having found the secret to contentment.

First of all he makes it clear that even when the Church was unable to help him, he was not complaining.

He then says “I have learned” to be content no matter what happens in my life.

His experiences in life in all he had been through had taught him that God always came through. Paul lived in a state of mind of being satisfied. He was at peace and at rest. Nothing bothered him or took his joy.

He knew the secret to being contented. The word for secret is to be initiated into something he had not been into before; something all new to him.

Experiencing poverty and prosperity, being full and being hungry, having everything and having nothing proved to him that he could do all things in Christ Who gave him the strength.

Whatever Christ has for you to do, He will give you the power to do it. When we are in the will of God and on track with His purposes for us then nothing will be too hard for the Lord to help us. It's when we take this out of context and think we can do whatever we want and it doesn't work out, that we get into trouble. It is when we are in Christ, in His will that we will find contentment and His power providing for us.

Paul does say "it was a good thing that you helped me".

"¹⁴ Nevertheless you have done well to share with me in my suffering."

To share is the word for partnership. The Philippians and Paul became partners in the ministry.

"¹⁵ You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the Gospel after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone. ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs."

It was the Philippian Church who alone supported Paul's ministry. While serving the churches at Macedonia it was the Philippians who paid his expenses, and when he left to move one, it was the same people who stepped in again. If you think about it we have the letter to the Philippians thanking them for giving and we are still learning from it the Gospel of Christ. Their ministry lives on after 2,000 years. What an opportunity the Macedonians lost to be a blessing. God always sends help from somewhere. What we do see today is that nothing has changed. The support of the ministry is done by very few but God has His people to step in.

Giving to the ministry and the preaching of the Gospel is a sacrifice well pleasing to God.

"¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God."

The image of the sacrifices these people made is of the OT priesthood offering up sacrifices on the altar that were an aroma to God.

Giving, when done in a right attitude as an expression of worship, is put to your account before God in Heaven. He sees and will remember what you gave. It will profit these generous people forever in Heaven. Some people have chosen to lay-up-in-store their treasures in Heaven.

God makes a promise to those who made such sacrifices.

“¹⁹ And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and forever, Amen.”

What a letter of thanksgiving, being thankful to God and the people who are our friends and partners in Christ.

We all have so much to be thankful for. All that we have and all that people do for us, and what we do for them in Jesus Christ is why we are constantly giving thanks.

Happy Thanksgiving!