

**Sunday, November 26, 2023**

**“Practicing Gratitude”**

by C Benjamin Dill

**Psalm 100:4** Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: **be thankful unto him, and bless his name.**

Do you consider yourself to be a thankful person?

As you think about this, let me tell you about the truly Christian- American Holiday that we just celebrated this last Thursday, starting with:

**The Pilgrims:**

After 66 days at sea and their first winter in America, of the 102 Pilgrims that began the journey from Holland, 46 were now dead. With the help of Native Americans, they now had their first bountiful crop and on December 13, 1621, they celebrated their successful harvest with a three-day feast of thanksgiving to God.

There were several other days set aside for a day of thanksgiving from time to time. In 1789 George Washington declared the first Thursday in November to be our “regular day of thanksgiving to God”. Different days and times were declared at state levels but nothing national ever caught on until 1863.

During the battle of Gettysburg 60,000 Americans died in that one single battle. Four months later President Abraham Lincoln spoke these words to a friend:

**When I left Springfield [to assume the Presidency] I asked the people to pray for me. I was not a Christian. When I buried my son, the severest trial of my life, I was not a Christian. But when I went to Gettysburg and saw the graves of thousands of our soldiers, I then and there consecrated myself to Christ.**

Shortly after President Lincoln became a Christian, he issued this proclamation:

**Proclamation of Thanksgiving** by the President of the United States  
of America

**T**he year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful years and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the Source from which they come, others have been added which are of so extraordinary a nature that they can not fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign states to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theater of military conflict, while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the field of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the ax has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than theretofore. Population has steadily increased notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battlefield, and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and one voice, by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to

heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union.

In testimony wherof I have herunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed. [Signed] A. Lincoln

In 1941 Congress permanently established the fourth Thursday of November as a National Holiday.

Leaders today often make references comparing themselves to Abraham Lincoln.

Maybe we could believe them if their speech placed the credit for the blessings of this Nation where Mr. Lincoln placed it.

I rarely ever quote this many words from any source other than the Scriptures. These words were written by an admitted sinner who was in the midst of some of history's most horrific pain, trouble, loss and sorrow that any leader has ever had to bear. The Civil War was still raging on; men were still dying under his command. Yet in the midst of all this, this man was able to see the goodness of God!

I asked you earlier, "Do you consider yourself to be a thankful person?"

Allow me to ask you another: *"Is it what you **do** that makes you what you are? ... Or Is it what you **are** that determines what you do?"*

It is, as we have learned from God's Word, what we ARE that determines the things that we do.

To truly BE thankful is one of the most powerful determining forces in your life.

Go back now to the original question; do you consider yourself to be a thankful person?

Today we are going to look at this tremendous spiritual force called gratitude or thankfulness and hopefully see how it works:

## **I. Gratitude is the companion of a positive attitude.**

*A. Thankful people are generally positive people.*

1. We generally get what we do expect in life.

2. One man leaves a job interview and says in his heart: "I knew they weren't going to hire me".

3. **Proverbs 23:7** For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: ...

4. That they who expect good things generally receive them is a well-documented fact;

5. Do they expect them because they are used to receiving them or do they receive them because they expect them?

*B. Now go back to that original question again; do you consider yourself to be a thankful person?*

1. Have you ever gotten a paycheck or a settlement on some business deal and it wasn't as much money as you had hoped?

2. What was your first reaction? Did you rejoice over what **WAS** there or did you only stress about what **WAS NOT** there?

3. Two men leave an unsuccessful job interview:

a. One says in his heart: "I knew the Lord wasn't going to give me this job; I guess He thinks I'm just a loser too".

.b. Another leaves the same unsuccessful job interview and says in his heart; "OK Lord, another one down; we're one step closer to THE one I know you have for me".

*B. Most negative people think that being generally negative is really not a big deal; "it's just the way I am".*

1. You could not be more WRONG! Being generally negative IS also being generally unthankful!

2. If all you can see is the empty half of the glass you certainly will not be thankful for what is in the other half.

Secondly:

## **II. Gratitude is the root cause of all blessings.**

*A. What causes God to release to us the blessings He has already reserved for us?*

1. Listen and learn:

### **2 Corinthians 9:6-8**

6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

8 And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

2. God is able and willing (I might add) to give us “all things” required to supply “every good work”. (The next verses reveal His motivation).

## **2 Corinthians 9:9-12**

9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth forever.

10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, **which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.**

12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is **abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;**

3. What do you suppose will happen when God blesses you and supplies your needs and there is no gratitude for it that comes back to Him?

4. I guess you don't have to be super smart to figure that one out.

*B. It is Gratitude that puts power in your prayers.*

1. **Philippians 4:6** Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication **with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known unto God.

2. There are different kinds of prayer:

a. When you see the words “pray” or “prayer”, it means communication with God; it is a somewhat general term.

b. The term “supplication” is *deh'-ay-sis*  
a *petition*: prayer, request, supplication.

c. Supplication is asking for stuff.

3. **Philippians 4:6** is some of the best advice you will ever get...always offer thanks for what you've been given before you ask more.

4. Why do Christians often ask without thanksgiving, or they just offer a ritual generalized “Lord, thank you for everything now give me this, this and this”?

5. It's because we don't notice what God has done for us! We are too busy looking at the empty half of the glass.

### III. Gratitude is a command! (There are at least four specific elements).

#### A. *Be thankful.*

1. **Psalm 100:4** Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: **be thankful** unto him, *and* bless his name.
2. **Colossians 3:15** And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and **be ye thankful.**
3. If you are saved, somewhere down inside your born-again spirit is a thankful believer; ask God to show you how to let your righteous new man rule.

#### B. *Voice your thanksgiving.*

1. **Psalm 26:7** That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.
2. **Psalm 69:30** I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.
3. **Psalm 147:7** Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God:
  4. In our Lighthouse Bible Class we start every Sunday morning with voicing our gratitude to the Lord. We don't do this just to kill time until everyone arrives; it is one of the most essential things we do!

#### C. *Offer sacrifices of thanksgiving.*

1. **Leviticus 22:29** And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer *it* at your own will.
2. **Psalm 107:21-22**
  - 21 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
  - 22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.
3. **Psalm 116:17-18**
  - 17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.
  - 18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people,
4. **Jonah 2:9-10**

9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay *that* that I have vowed. Salvation *is* of the LORD.

10 And the LORD spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry *land*.

5. Can we truly say we are thankful without a willingness to give back some of what we have been given?

*D. Demonstrate your gratitude.*

1. Jonah cleaned off the slime and then went and did what God told him to do.

2. Are you tired of living in the fish's belly?  
Maybe it is time to demonstrate some real gratitude in your life.

3. Nothing to be thankful for? Maybe you will see it differently when God takes away what you should have been thankful for.

**Conclusion: We have developed in America a generation with an entitlement mentality; a generation that thinks that God or the government or somebody owes them a certain standard of living. This foolish and unthankful perspective has filtered its way into our churches.**

**Luke 6:35** But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the **unthankful** and *to* the evil.

**2 Timothy 3:2** For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, **unthankful**, unholy,

To be unthankful places one in some pretty unseemly company. Notice that all these other terms; evil, covetous, blasphemer, unholy and many more come as companions to the character of one who is unthankful.

**If you are a generally negative; ie. "unthankful" person, take these positive steps today:**

- 1. Admit it to the Lord. (he knows anyway, as well as everybody else that knows you).**
- 2. Acknowledge to Him that you need His help to BE a thankful person.**
- 3. Ask Him to let you see the good side of things first.**
- 4. Then proceed to do your part.**