**THANKS BEYOND THANKSGIVING**

 Thanksgiving is a great holiday for people of faith, because scripture speaks so much about being grateful for all that God has done for us. It is mentioned over 100 times in the Old Testament and over 70 times in the New Testament.

With all this emphasis on “Thanks,” we should be the most thankful people in the world, not just on Thanksgiving, but all through the year.

THANKS BEYOND THANKSGIVING

But what about beyond Thanksgiving? On Black Friday do we then revert to taking for granted all the things God has given us, and how He graciously provides for us every day?

Our Attitude of gratitude should last all year long.

When we consider God’s love for us, His protection and provision in the big and small things in life, our best response is to simply say *“Thanks!”*

And not just *say* it, but *live a life of Thanksgiving*.

As we live with an *attitude of gratitude*, we express a heart of thankfulness to God, and to those to whom we are grateful.

Gratitude is powerful. It’s actually very contagious. It’s hard not to be grateful when you are around someone who always is.

Also, you may notice that the happiest people you know, are probably also the most grateful (and vice versa). In fact the happiest and most grateful people you know may *not* be those whom the world would consider the wealthiest, most fortunate and most successful, in fact it’s often those who have little, who are the most grateful.

An Attitude of Gratitude is not merely “*saying thanks*” for some things, it’s *giving thanks* for all things, not just because you feel like it, but because it is the will of God.

**1st Thessalonians 5:18** “In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

The word gratitude has its origin in the words “gratis” and “grace.” This is why the phrase *“thank you”* in other languages sounds so similar:

Latin - “gratias”, Italian - “grazie”, Spanish - “gracias”

“Thanks” and “grace” go hand-in-hand. This is why we often refer to the *“giving of thanks*” before a meal as *“saying grace.”*

Many families give thanks, or say “grace,” before every meal, some only on holidays like Thanksgiving. Others don’t say it at all.

*I grew up in a home that said grace before dinner every evening. We were a large family of six sons and six daughters. My mother would sit on one end of the long table, my father on the other. We were lined up on benches according to age — boys on one side, girls on the other, oldest to youngest. No one could touch the food or eat a morsel until my father (who was Catholic) said “grace,” which was always the same:*

*“Bless us, Oh Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.”*

*After the “amen,” it was a free-for-all of food, plates, silverware and serving dishes being passed around in a wonderful frenzy that lasted until the final portion was eaten and every casserole dish was empty. It was crazy and chaotic, but we were all grateful.*

Today, I carry on this tradition with my small family, but we offer a more spontaneous, less-scripted “thanks”, and there is not nearly as much food consumed.

I have found that it’s not the *“saying of grace”* that’s important but *having thankful hearts*. Having “thankful hearts” means that we remain in a posture of seeing God’s grace in all things. When we recognize the nature of grace, it’s very easy to be grateful.

**JESUS GAVE THANKS**

Jesus was always giving thanks.

* *Both* times that he fed the multitudes with fish and bread , he began by “GIVING THANKS”
* On the road to Emmaus after the resurrection, he was recognized by the two disciples when he “GAVE THANKS”
* THE LAST SUPPER (Passover Seder) before breaking the bread, and passing the cup, HE GAVE THANKS. *(Baruch a Ta Adonai…)*

BUT HOW CAN WE GIVE THANKS IN THE TOUGH TIMES?

Sometimes it’s difficult to be grateful when circumstances are hard, and things do not go our way. There are times when we face tragedies and grief and it seems impossible to utter anything that even remotely sounds grateful.

These are the times when we need to receive “grace.” Grace is God’s free gift to us of His love, compassion, mercy and understanding. When we understand the depth of His grace toward us, in spite of circumstances, it’s easy to be grateful.

Sometimes we don’t FEEL like thanking God or praising him.

Sometimes we try to begin our prayer with thanks, but find it difficult because of the many burdens on our hearts.

It is then that we must trust in HIS Word - **not** Our feelings.

**PHIL 4:6-7** *“***6**Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. **7**Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”

The story of Daniel in the Lion’s Den had a crucial moment where Daniel had to do just that; “Don’t worry, Pray and give thanks”

His gratefulness had powerful results…

**Daniel 6: 7** “The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions’ den. 8 Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.” 9 So King Darius put the decree in writing.

 10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and *prayed*, *giving thanks to his God*, just as he had done before.”

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**16**So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions’ den. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!”

**17**A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel’s situation might not be changed. **18**Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.

**19**At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den. **20**When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?”

**21**Daniel answered, “May the king live forever! **22**My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.”

**23**The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

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**25**Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth:

“May you prosper greatly!

**26**“I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.

“For he is the living God and he endures forever;
his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end.
**27**He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders
    in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel
    from the power of the lions.”

Daniel’s gratefulness, courage and willingness to follow God, despite the decree, lead not only to *his own rescue* from the jaws of the Lion’s, but the entire kingdom being decreed to worship and fear God.

**Dan. 6:10** “Three times a day he got down on his knees and *prayed*, *giving thanks to his God.”*

What would have happened if Daniel just became bitter at the bad news of the King’s *mandate* and never gave thanks and prayed to God? …We will never know.

We *do know* that when WE come before the Lord with gratefulness, in spite of what we hear, read or whatever decrees come against us, He delights in us and blesses us.

Remember: ““In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” *(1st Thess. 5:18)*

God wants to be thanked.

***Jesus liked being thanked.***

**THE TEN LEPERS - Luke 17:11-19** (NIV)

 11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+17%3A11-19&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25664a)] met him. They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

 14 When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.

 15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

 17 Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” 19 Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

Jesus had hoped to be thanked by all ten lepers, yet *to his disappointment,* only one returned.

We are all to be like the *one* leper who returned to say “Thanks” to God.

**CONCLUSION: “IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS”**

* Thank him for the Provision that God has given and all that you have, rather than complain about what you don’t have.
* Thank him for your health, and the health he’s given your family and children, rather than be ungrateful because of your nagging pains, and even more serious medical conditions.

*Most importantly,*

* **Thank Him for the cross**. Without Jesus dying on the cross, every single one of us would be doomed to eternal condemnation. But because he was willing to suffer on the cross and die, we can have eternal life simply be believing upon Him in our hearts.

We can have assurance of salvation if we fully put our trust in Him by “believing in our hearts”

**Romans 10:9-10** “**9**If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10**For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

Believing with your heart, means that it is that your faith in God is the most important thing in your entire life, the thing you are most passionate about. The reward for that is salvation and eternal life.

If you have never given Him your heart, now is the time to ask Him to come in and be “Lord” of your life. To wash away your sins and give you eternal salvation. It comes simply by asking and believing, not by “doing” anything to earn, learn, acquire or attain.

If you have never done that, today is the day.

Ask Him to come into your heart, and thank Him when He does.

**Colossians 3:15** *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*