

"Be Thankful"

How long has it been since you counted your blessings? How long has it been since you gave God a second thought? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're going to explore the value of giving thanks to God. Stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We turn to the Bible to learn about the power and the wisdom of God. We know "Every good thing and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow" (James 1 and verse 17). God is the source of life, of love, and of every blessing we enjoy. For that reason, we should come to know and to love Him. The best way to do that is through a diligent study of the word of God. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Each year America sets aside a day to thank God for our blessings and to consider our relationship with Him. God has truly given us reason to be thankful. Let's never let it be said that we were ungrateful or forgetful for what God has done. William Law in his book *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* said, "Would you know who is the greatest saint in the world? It's not he who prays most or fasts most; it's not he who gives most alms, or is more eminent for temperance, chastity, or justice; but it's he who is always thankful to God who wills everything that God wills, who receives everything as an instance of God's goodness, and has a heart always ready to praise God for it." In the old Anglo-Saxon, thankfulness means "thinkfulness." Thinking of all God's blessings and goodness makes us grateful.

Let's set aside this week for more than turkey and ball games. Let's genuinely thank God for all that He's done for us today and every day! Let's consider our relationship to the One who gave us life and every blessing.

Now if you want to study more, we offer this study free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free online at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Colossians 3:12 to 17, and then we'll explore what it means to be thankful.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Colossians, chapter 3, verses 12 to 17. "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." That's a wonderful reading encouraging us to be thankful. Let's pray together. Oh Father we are so grateful to You for the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrifice. For all the blessings that we have of life, of our food, of our own, of our clothes and all of the blessings that You give us. And Father we pray that we may always do Your will on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!

David said in Psalm 100 and verse 4, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name." A thankful heart is a cheerful heart and one ready to give praise

to God. It counts its blessings and knows how good God has been to every one of us. In Psalm 103 verses 1 to 5, David again urges us, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; Who satisfies your years with good things, *So that* your youth is renewed like the eagle."

The Bible says in Hebrews 13 verse 15, "Through Him (that is Jesus) then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name." Now thanksgiving is not just a holiday for once a year; it should be a way of life. The Bible says in James 1 and verse 17, that "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." Your food, your water, your clothing, and your house—all of them come from His loving hand. He does indeed crown us with lovingkindness and compassion. Some people grumble and complain about every little thing, not realizing all that God has done for us, and He does it every day.

Now God gives us many spiritual blessings. He gives us peace, He gives us His Word the Bible to teach and admonish us, He gives us a song to build us up, and He gives us a purpose in life. The goodness of God makes us better people. His love makes us want to love all the more.

It's not always easy to be thankful. Life is not always fair; and things don't always go smoothly. But God said in 1 Thessalonians 5 verses 16 to 18, "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; and in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." The test of a Christian is not will he give thanks when things are easy, but will he give thanks and praise God when life is harsh? Christians rejoice always for Christ and His cross, even when the world hates them. They don't quit praying, because life is rough. They pray even more. They give thanks "in" everything and in every circumstance. They know everything is not good or pleasant; but they also know Romans 8 and verse 28. The Bible says: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose." Not everything is good, but God can cause it to work for good. So that we give thanks in everything.

The Pilgrims who came to America thought it good to thank God for their food and their lives. The Congress in the earliest days of the United States also thought it good to thank God for all His provisions of freedom and prosperity. On November 1, 1777 the United States Congress issued this proclamation to the whole nation:

"It is therefore recommended to the legislative or executive powers of these United States, to set apart Thursday, the 18th day of December next, for solemn thanksgiving and praise; that with one heart and one voice the good people may express the grateful feelings of their hearts, and consecrate themselves to the service of their divine benefactor; and that together with their sincere acknowledgments and offerings, they may join the penitent confession of their manifold sins, whereby they had forfeited every favor, and their humble and earnest supplication that it may please God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of remembrance; that it may please him graciously to afford his blessings on these governments of these states respectively, and prosper the public council of the whole; to inspire our commanders both by land and sea, and all that are under them, with that wisdom and fortitude which may render them fit instruments, under the providence of Almighty God, to secure for these United States the greatest of all blessings, independence and peace."

This early Congressional proclamation asked America to confess their manifold sins and ask God to forgive them so that the government and the military may be fit instruments under the providence of Almighty God. You see, the early Americans knew God was the source of their liberties. They also knew that if they abandoned the will of God that's found in the Bible, they would lose the favor of God and their liberties. They knew what God said in Jeremiah 18 verses 7 to 10. He said, "If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it."

My friend nations do not stand or fall on the basis of their wealth or their might. No! Many nations have been very wealthy and powerful, yet they fell. We must understand. A nation stands or falls on the basis of its willingness to live by the principles found in God's Holy Word. The God of Heaven, the God of the Bible, is the true King of our country and of every country. He is a greater power than all our weapons.

And the people who began this country understood God's role in its establishment. Did you know the very first act on the very first day of the very first Continental Congress on September 7, 1774, that their first act was to read Psalm 35 and pray? Did you know the representatives of that congress when they prayed were kneeling, bowed with reverence, and praying in the name of Jesus Christ? Well who was kneeling? Patriots like George Washington, Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay. Did you know that they began every day with prayer at 9 o'clock?

The Continental Congress on May 16, 1776, appointed a day of fasting and prayer for the colonies. They said, "The Congress.... Desirous... to have people of all ranks and degrees duly impressed with a solemn sense of God's superintending providence, and of their duty, devoutly to rely... on his aid and direction... Do earnestly recommend Friday, the 17th day of May be observed by the colonies as a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer; that we may, with united hearts, confess and bewail our manifold sins and transgressions, and, by sincere repentance and amendment of life, appease God's righteous displeasure, and do this through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, obtain this pardon and forgiveness."

Benjamin Franklin said in the Constitutional Convention of 1787, that "God governs in the affairs of man. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured in the Sacred Writings that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it (Now that's a quotation of Psalm 127 verse 1). (And Franklin said) I firmly believe this. I also believe that, without His concurring aid, that we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel."

Now after the first battle of Bull Run, Abraham Lincoln declared September 26, 1861 as a National Day of Prayer and Fasting. He said, "It is fit and becoming in all people, at all times, to acknowledge and revere the Supreme Government of God; to bow in humble submission to His chastisement; to confess and deplore their sins and transgressions in the full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and to pray, with all fervency and contrition, for the pardon of their past offenses, and for a blessing upon their present and prospective action."

When Solomon became king over Israel he asked God's blessing on the nation. And God answered Solomon's prayer with these words found in 2 Chronicles 7 verses 13 to 14, God said "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence

among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” Solomon knew being right with God makes a difference. By inspiration he wrote in Proverbs 14 and verse 34, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” One must wonder how long God will tolerate the sins of this or any nation.

We cannot take God’s grace and blessing for granted, that He will always favor us regardless of how we live. Israel made that mistake, and Babylon destroyed them. When we allow taking the lives of the unborn and selling their organs, when two of every five children are born out of wedlock, when we’re mixed up about morals and marriage, and when some have ousted God from public life, do you think God will remain silent? Isn’t it time that we all took stock of our spiritual lives? Isn’t it time that we repented of our sins and made changes in our lives? How can we thank God one day and act like He doesn’t exist the next day? We should thank God and remember what He’s done for us every day.

Let’s say “thank you” to God for His mercy and blessing. Let’s never become like the nine lepers that Jesus healed. You’ll remember in Luke 17 they raised their voices, saying, “‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ And when He saw them, He said to them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they were going, they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. And then Jesus answered and said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they? Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?’”

My friend merely saying thank You to God is a good beginning, but God wants more than mere appreciation. He wants our hearts, our souls, and our lives. The people of Haggai’s day had grown so busy with their lives they forgot the task that God had given them to do in rebuilding the temple. God said in Haggai 1 verses 5 to 6, “Consider your ways! You’ve sown much but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied;...you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns ways to put into a purse with holes.” Could it be that we today are facing so many struggles, because we too have forgotten our God? Could it be that we need to consider our ways and be thankful for what God has done?

We cannot expect to live in sin or apathy and still please God. Galatians 6 verses 7 to 8 teaches, “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” Isn’t it time that we humbled ourselves and began seeking the Lord? Let’s pray together. Oh Father, we pray that we may come to love You more, and seek Your face, and humble our hearts, and repent of our sins. And Father may Your will be done on earth even as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

There’s always a point at which God’s patience comes to an end, when God sees that people have embraced evil and do not wish to change. 2 Peter 2 verses 4 to 10 says, “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; and if he didn’t spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the Godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the

day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority." We can't continue in sin and expect God to continue to bless us. Do you have sins in your life? Do you need to repent?

To become a Christian, put your trust wholeheartedly in Jesus Christ and in His words in the Bible, turn your heart from sin to the Lord, and cease from sin and live for Jesus, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Acts 2:38 still says, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Now that promise is for all people for all time. When we're baptized, the Lord washes away our sins (Acts 22:16) and He makes us His children (Galatians 3 verses 26 to 27). Oh won't you become a Christian today?

Truly counting your blessings will change your life. If you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

We ask that you please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with, tell your friends about this program, and urge them to watch it each and every time. And as always we say to each of you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.