

"Be Thankful"

You can measure the heart of a person not only by his attitude but even more so by his gratitude. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're going to examine the need to be thankful. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path." The word of God enlightens us about the most important questions: Well, where did I come from? Why am I here? What will happen to me when I die? What is sin? Can I go to heaven? How should I live? How can I draw close to God? Oh, I'm so thankful for my Bible! Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Psalm 92 verses 1 and 2 says, that "It is good to give thanks to the LORD And to sing praises to (His) name, O Most High; To declare Your loving kindness in the morning And Your faithfulness by night." During the Thanksgiving holiday, we remember our blessings and express our thanks to God for them. But thanks should be on our lips every day. We can never say thank you enough to family, friends, and especially to God. Thanksgiving is not just something that we do to be kind; it also blesses us. When thanksgiving becomes an integral part of your life, you'll find your attitude and life change. You'll become more positive, gracious, loving, and humble.

We're all wholly dependent upon the God who created us for life. He provides all our needs. God's preparation of our universe allows us to breathe, to have fresh water, to have food, and to have night and day, this shows His love for us. Now creation is not an accident. God made this world for our blessing. And so we need to honor God for all that He's done and to be thankful. The act of giving thanks leads to healthy hearts, minds and lives. Giving thanks also will lead us to take God and His ways seriously. And nothing is more important!

If you want to study more, we offer this study free. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and 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, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

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

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter 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, (and) 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.

Oh, what a valuable reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Father we're grateful for all that You have done for us. And for all that You have blessed us with. Father help us to live our lives in such a way that we give glory and honor and thanksgiving to You. This is our pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

God has always urged His people to be thankful. Paul urged the church in Colossians 4 and verse 2 to “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.” He had already given the reason for this; it’s because of what the Lord Jesus has done. He said in Colossians 2 verses 6 to 7, “Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.” He said walk as you were instructed and overflow with gratitude. Oh gratitude will make your life brighter and better. It will fill your life with joy.

The Christian life should overflow with gratitude. Well, how do we do this? Well, Colossians 3:15 to 17 of course says, “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, (and then he says) giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” Oh, let Christ’s peace be your focus, sing with thankfulness in your heart, and do everything in His name while giving thanks. These changes will lift your spirits and encourage your heart. Your focus determines your attitude and your destiny. Hebrews 13 and verse 15 says, “Through Him 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 it takes discipline to keep focusing your mind on God. Life is ever changing, distracting, and often unfair. We can’t predict what misfortunes may lie ahead, but we can count our blessings that we now enjoy with confidence. We can remember that we are victorious in Christ. We can be certain that God will keep His promises, for He Himself has said in Hebrews 13:5, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.”

So, we must follow God’s teaching in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to 18, “pray without ceasing; (and) in everything (yes everything) give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” He asked well, you mean in everything? Yes, in everything. In the good times and in the bad, give thanks. When life is unfair, give thanks for what you have in Christ, He’s been fair. Even if you suffer for the name of Christ, give thanks! 1 Peter 4:12 to 14 says, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.” The “here and now” isn’t everything; the Lord will reward those who love and serve Him.

Now our struggles prepare us for something better, so be thankful even for struggles. James 1 verses 2 to 4 says, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” I tell you God is shaping and molding us for service in this life and for eternity, so don’t despair when you face a struggle. Learn to be thankful for everything. Why?

Well first, when you’re thankful, you’ll stop complaining and grumbling. You know throughout their journey in the wilderness, the Israelites grumbled against God. God counted their grumbling as a lack of trust; 1 Corinthians 10 regards grumbling as sinful as idolatry or sexual immorality. Philippians 2 verses 14 to 16 says, “Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the

day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain." When you complain, you neglect to appreciate what good the Lord has done for you.

Second, when you're thankful, you'll stop being so anxious or worrisome. Philippians 4 verses 4 to 7 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, (that is stop worrying about anything) but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Now when we rejoice in the Lord and take our burdens and our cares to Him, He blesses us with peace. He'll put a guard around our hearts and minds!

Now start rejoicing over the things God has done for you, and life will grow more positive and joyful. Proverbs 15 and verse 30 says that, "Bright eyes gladden the heart; (and) Good news puts fat on the bones." Count your blessings, focus on the good, and rejoice in Jesus Christ! Put away the negative and focus on the good. Philippians 4 and verse 8 says, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence (that is moral excellence) and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." That is let your mind make it's home there. Think about them all the time.

Third, when you're thankful, you'll become more humble and less prideful. Remember God is the source of every blessing. James 1:17 says 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." Well, this is why the Lord in Matthew 6 and verse 11 asks us to pray to God, "Give us this day our daily bread." Now you may work a job and think it all depends on you, but remember God is at the source of every blessing.

Moses reminded the Israelites as they were about to enter the promised land in Deuteronomy 8 verses 11 to 14, you "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, (and) out of the house of slavery." You see pride leads to forgetfulness. Now he urged them in verse 18, "But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day." I tell you God is the source of all that we possess, all we are, and all we hope to be. 1 Corinthians 4 and verse 7 asks some arrogant people, "For who regards you as superior? (And) What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"

Now some folks focus on their own abilities and their own righteousness. When a person gives thanks to God merely for what he possesses within himself, he's actually bragging about himself more than thanking God. The Lord Jesus contrasted the arrogant person with the person who recognizes his total need and dependency on God. Look at Luke 18 verses 11 to 14. There the Lord said that, "The Pharisee stood and was praying this (and he was praying) to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'" This man wasn't really praying or thanking God; he was reading his resume.

"But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, (Jesus says) this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be

humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." Gratitude to God, knowing that we have an absolute need for God, removes our pride and makes us more humble.

Fourth, when you're thankful, you'll be more gracious to others. The Lord Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6 and verse 12, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Giving thanks for God's grace leads us to be willing to forgive others. Ephesians 4 verses 31 and 2 says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." A gracious person who knows the kindness of the Lord realizes the importance of being kind to others. He opens his heart and his wallet to help those in need and doesn't complain.

Fifth, when you're thankful, you'll express your love. We're thankful the Lord Jesus willingly and lovingly sacrificed Himself upon the cross. 1 John 4 and verse 19 says that, "We love, because He first loved us." Now giving thanks helps me keep my focus on the Lord and on what really matters. Gratitude for what Jesus did is at the heart of our conversion. Gratitude leads us to be committed disciples who want to please the Lord in all that we do. We can't look deeply at the cross and then walk away as if nothing matters. Our thankfulness will not let us.

Oh does the cross matter to you? Surprisingly, some act as if the cross never happened; and others live as if it didn't matter. Perhaps you remember when Jesus healed the ten lepers. Luke 17 verses 12 to 16 says, "As He entered a village, (that) ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; and they raised their voices, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' 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."

You know when people fail to remember God, honor Him, or thank Him, they lose sight of the blessing of living as God's people. An ungrateful person will become apathetic and callous toward God. And when people lose sight of God, they also lose sight of morality and truth. They don't realize that when they stop honoring God, they start dishonoring themselves.

Romans 1:21 to 24 described the pagan Gentiles this way: "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. (And) Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them."

Giving thanks matters. When you love God, and you want to serve Him with all your heart. Psalm 50 verse 23 says that, "He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me; And to him who orders his way aright I shall show the salvation of God." I tell you truly giving thanks comes from our hearts and shows in our lives. Thanksgiving leads to thanks-living. Are you thankful? Let's pray together. Father bless us and help us to be more mindful of all that You've done. Give us strength and help us to be courageous in all of our lives to live for You. And may Your will be done on earth as is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I look forward to going to heaven and seeing Jesus. The first thing I want to do is say to Him "Thank you. Thank you for dying for me. Thank you for shedding your blood to cleanse me from all my terrible sins, so that I could live with you." But I don't have to wait till I go to heaven to express my thanks to God. I can do it now by getting right with Him and by worshiping Him. I don't want to miss a single Lord's Day, the first day of the week, without prayer and singing praise to Him. I don't want miss

gathering around the Lord's table to partake of the Lord's Supper, remembering the Lord's body and blood which were given for me.

The word "thankful" actually comes from the old English word "think-ful." Being thankful comes from being think-ful. When we realize how blessed we are, we should respond to the love and goodness of God. How often people today want and want from God, but never think to give their praise, or their thanks, or their hearts to Him. Have you?

God's goodness leads us to repent and obey the gospel. If I thank God for His grace, I'll gladly follow and obey Him. God's love leads us to trust Him, to repent of our sins, to confess His name, and to be baptized into Christ. According to Romans 6 verses 3 to 7, we die with Christ in baptism, we're buried with Him in baptism, and we're raised with Him to walk in newness of life in baptism. God wants you, He wants your heart, your life, and your soul. Won't you serve Him and follow Him always. Thankfulness begins when people keep the Lord Jesus in their hearts everyday and serve Him. And we hope that you'll not wait another day to put on your Lord in baptism.

Well we hope today's study about being thankful has stirred you to commit yourself to the Lord Jesus. 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 our website: www.searchtv.org. You can also watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Just subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." There's also a schedule of our programs and a map 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.

So get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.