

Be Thankful!

Appreciation

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A few months ago we took my mother-in-law to Vegas, she was considering retiring there. I used to go there all the time for my job, but I always breathed a sigh of relief when I was leaving the town headed toward home. Las Vegas is unbelievable. The sole purpose of the town is to promote gambling, entertainment, and escape to the full, and every imaginable show, food, or hotel, decoration, or activity runs to satiate the human appetite we have today. And of course, the town runs 24/7, 52 weeks a year, and never shuts down. The amount of money spent and the purposes for which it was spent is indecent and obscene.

You walk down the strip and you see the volcano erupting, you see a pirate ship with men up in the rig fighting, you see the grandeur of Caesar's Palace, all the gold leaf and the statues. You see the all-glass Egyptian pyramid with a giant searchlight that shines straight up into the heavens.

One time we were traveling through the outskirts of town and it was late, about 10 o'clock and I thought we would stop for a bite to eat at the casino thinking that it would be less crowded, but the parking lot was plum full, we had to shoulder our way through the crowds to get to the dining room. I could not help but wonder "what are all these people doing here?" And one cannot help but think that we are a nation that has too much and does not know what to spend its money on.

I received a publication and there was an article on just how wealthy we are; and it read: "If the world was reduced to a village of 1,000 people, 60 of them would be American with the remaining 940 representing the rest of the world. Those 60 Americans would have over 15 times more material possessions than their neighbors. Their lifespan would be approximately 70 years, while their neighbor's lifespan would be less than 40. And finally of the villages 53 phones, the Americans would own 28." We are so blessed, brethren!

The country that we live in is awesome opulence compared to the rest of the world. Our clothing discards are something to behold to the other nations. As far as I know we have one of the premier telephone systems in the world and a large majority of our homes have personal computers and we have the Internet, we have automobiles of every type and we spend great sums of money on them to transport us around while the rest of the world predominately walks or, if they are lucky, take a bus or have a bike.

And even though our country is starting to have more and more health problems, we have still received the benefit of God's health laws with our cleanliness standards, water purity, food preparation, and storage. Even with all the earthquakes and the hurricanes, the loss of life has been minimal because of God's protection.

As far as our homes go, some may have bigger or nicer homes than others, but most all of us have a roof over our heads, food, running water, indoor plumbing, heat to keep us warm, and even televisions. Other areas of the world people sleep on dirt floors, in abandoned sewer pipes, or in tin shacks.

Concerning our military, we are the strongest nation on earth, we seem indestructible. Now because of all the blessing that have showered upon us we are a people who have been able to accumulate all the wealth, strength, health, greatness, glitz, prosperity, full grocery stores, fertile farm lands, large corporations, and the military power we are protected by at this time.

But in acquiring all these things we paid a great price. We have produced a people who have forgotten God, a people who have gone the "get" way because they are satiated with the desire for wealth and things and have become selfish, spoiled, unthankful people. Turn to Deuteronomy 8 and we will read the whole chapter.

Deuteronomy 8:1-5 "Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers. And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would

keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you.”

Deuteronomy 8:6-12 “Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; . . .

Deuteronomy 8:13-20 . . . and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end—then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’ And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. Then it

shall be, if you by any means forget the Lord your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. As the nations which the Lord destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God.”

Now brethren, we are not a nation today that prays for its crops to come in, as our forefathers did who knew that they were dependent upon God for their very existence. I do not know if we really know where food comes from anymore, we think it comes from cans or frozen. We do not see that it comes from God. We are not concerned about our water or power, we just open the tap and water comes out, flip the switch and we have electricity. We do not really stop to think where it comes from.

We are not a fasting or praying nation, as were during WWII when we were concerned about the Japanese defeating us and wanted God to spare us. We are now a self-sufficient nation that does not need God, or thinks that we do not need God.

In spite of the cracks we see forming in our country, we still feel secure as a nation and its leaders will be able to solve all the problems that may come along. The thing that saddens me the most is that we are not a thankful people. We do not appreciate the country we have been given and the material blessings. And what is worse is that our people do not even know to whom they owe thanks, because they no longer know who God is.

Just as thankfulness is evident in our country, it is also evident in the church. It is prophesied to be evident in the church in the end time. Turn over to II Timothy 3, verses 1-5.

II Timothy 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Albert Barnes' commentary brings out concerning thankfulness saying:

Ingratitude has always been regarded as one of the worst crimes. It is said here that it would characterize the wicked age of which the apostle speaks, and its prevalence would, as it always does, indicate a decline in religion. God's calling should make us grateful to every benefactor to God and to man.

He is saying unthankfulness is considered one of the worst crimes.

Thankfulness produces wonderful fruit, but in this end time it is predicted to be in short supply. *The Readers Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary* states: "To thank is defined as, to express gratitude; to give thanks. It comes from the root word *thane*—meaning thought. This indicates that thought and consideration are required to give proper thanks." It is not something that should just be thrown off. If the limit of our understanding is to just say the word thanks, then we would not have the entire picture.

I looked through *Zodhiates New Testament Word Study Dictionary* and the *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament* and I found five words translated as "thanks." They all sort of overlap, but yet they are all a little bit different. Looking at all five of these gives us a broader picture of what it means to say thanks.

We tend to think of giving thanks is just to say, "I thank you for something" but the first word here adds to this. The Greek word is *exomologeō* and by using this word to express thanks one professes complete agreement with God's decision. One approves of God's laws and thinking; it means to concur with Him in His verdict in whatever He does; it also means to give praise. Turn to Matthew 11:20, 25-26 to see an example of this word.

Matthew 11:20 Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent.

Matthew 11:25-26 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."

In I Corinthians 1:26-27, it says that God calls the weak and the foolish to confound the wise. Mankind would not have done that; he would have designated the higher ups of society to tell everyone else below them to be good. But Jesus Christ saw that God was doing it differently, and He said, “I approve. I approve of what you are doing and the way that you are doing it.”

The second word is in the Old Testament and it is *towgarmah*, and this word is a little bit different. This word can be used when you confess sins and thank God for His forgiveness. It is mostly used to confess God’s wonderful attributes; to praise God; and to just show love to God.

The third word is *efcharisto* and it means thankful or grateful, showing gratitude for any good experience. Turn to Acts 27 and we will see an example of that. The situation here was that Paul had been in the ship and it was going to founder, and they were going to be either shipwrecked or marooned on this island. The sailors had not eaten for fourteen days, so Paul was asking them to take meat.

Acts 27:34-36 “Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you.” And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat. Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves.

In chapter 28, Paul is being visited by some brethren to encourage him and he said:

Acts 28:15 And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

Here it shows that Paul is thanking God for an uplifting and encouraging experience, something that was good.

The next word is *anthomologo*, a very rare verb and only used twice in the Bible. It means to utter mutually the same thing. It is used when two parties

are thankful and are of one mind or of one accord. It also means to utter praise and to acknowledge God and to praise Him publicly. We will take a quick look at this in Luke 2. This is when baby Jesus was brought to Anna the prophetess.

Luke 2:34-38 Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Here you see Simeon who was with her, a devout man, and they both gave thanks publicly for all that God was going to do for those who were going to be redeemed.

The last word is *charis*, we refer to it today as grace, and it simply means a favor done without expectation of return, the absolute free expression of the lovingkindness of God to men, finding its only motive in the bounty and benevolence of the giver, unearned unmerited favor or pardon. We read of this in Romans 6. This is thanking God with no strings attached, it is pure thanks with nothing else attached.

Romans 6:16-17 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

So here he was saying “Thank you, Father, for what You are doing.” It was pure love for God, for these people putting away sin and taking up the

commandments of God and being obedient. So then as God gave to us freely, without thought of return, so we can freely thank God with great love, without any strings attached.

Let us recap this so we can get see the bigger picture here. The first form of thankfulness is the thankfulness that sees the sovereignty of God and agrees with all that God chooses, approves of God's thinking and all His laws. This thankfulness concurs with God in all His decisions whatever He does.

The second one was thankfulness that confesses the greatness of God and His wonderful attributes and the thankfulness toward God for forgiveness.

The third one was the gratitude that shows much gratitude for the many good experiences that God gives us (our homes, our families, all the pleasures we have, etc).

The fourth one was the thankfulness that expresses being of one mind with God and with each other, and acknowledging God publicly and praising Him publicly.

And the last one was the free, pure, loving thanks from a full heart to God that expresses love and appreciation for all that God does and all that God is without wanting anything in return. It is just pure loving thanks.

When we have a mind filled with this kind of thankfulness, wonderful things begin to happen. We begin to realize our indebtedness to God; we have a mind that begins to comprehend the greatness of God. Once you start to thank God for what He is doing, you begin to comprehend the utter greatness that God is and all that He does. When that happens, we begin to praise, esteem, cherish, and comprehend and recognize God and then something wonderful begins to happen, we begin to become humble and teachable and that in turn pleases God very much.

Needless to say, when we are not thankful to our God the opposite begins to happen. Turn to Romans 1, verses 18-21.

Romans 1:18-21 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men [what is being

said here is that the wrath of God's desire is to take vengeance upon those who do not hold Him in honor and upon those who break His laws and treat their neighbors wrong], who suppress the truth in unrighteousness [those who hold the truth back or hinder the truth of God, restrain its influence over others. The "intellectuals" who scoff at the belief in God], because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

He was saying here that the invisible things are made understandable and known by His visible works. You can see what God has done. God has given them clear evidence and therefore have no excuse. They did not have respect for God, did not hold Him in regard, and were not thankful to God for anything.

Barnes' Notes says something interesting here. He said: "The obligation to be thankful to God for His mercies, for the goodness we experience, is plain and obvious. The reasons for this are the following: 1) the effect of ingratitude is to render the heart and insensible."

He is saying here that when you are not grateful to God, not thankful, your heart ceases to be pliable and soft. It becomes hard.

Continuing on with the quote here: "2) Men seek to forget the being to whom they are unwilling to exercise gratitude."

He is saying that if you are not willing to thank God then you are going to forget God because you are not thinking of all that God does.

"3) Then when that takes place and they fix their affections on other things, therefore the heathens express their gratitude, not to God, but rather to the

sun, moon, stars, or any other god/idol, therefore they become vain, frivolous and foolish in their thinking and miss out on all that God has in store for them.” We read in verses 24-26 what happens after this happens.

Romans 1:24-26 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

We all understand what it means to give and receive thanks. Giving of thanks is recognition that someone has gone out of their way to do something, maybe even something difficult for them to do to give us what we need to help us. Each of us is touched when we have done something really difficult and someone says, “I really appreciate all that you have done for me.” We train our children to learn to say thank you, because we want our children to realize the sacrifice that people make for others.

I have tried to get brethren during the Feast of Tabernacles to thank each other for the year that they have had, for the fellowship we all have; for husbands to thank their wives for all they have done for them and vice versa. For the children to thank their parents for all they do in providing for them and for the parents to thank their children for resisting the pulls of their peers at school, realizing that the children are living in an environment that the parents never really knew existed when they were in school. We could not foresee it being this bad for the kids in today's age.

Being thankful to others encourages them to continue in well doing. If we are strengthened and encouraged by sincere thanks, then it stands to reason that God would be as well, when we thank Him for all that He does. We can see a great illustration of thanks here in Luke 17.

Luke 17:11-17 Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, “Jesus,

Master, have mercy on us!” So when He saw them, He said to them, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” And He said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”

Now here we see an individual’s act of thanksgiving and appreciation for what God did recorded in the Bible as an example that we can learn from. The situation was that because they were lepers, they could not be close to anyone so they stood afar off. They could not be around their families and only ate leftovers that others had left, so they cried, “Have mercy on us!” Jesus told them to show themselves to the priests, which they had to do to be proven clean so that they could come back into society. They all showed faith by being obedient and did what Jesus told them to do and during that time they were healed.

Nine continued on to be pronounced clean, but one stopped in his tracks and returned to glorify God and to give thanks and fell down at Christ’s feet. This one person was a Samaritan who was the least likely to do this, but he did. Christ asked, “Where were the other nine?” Were they ungrateful for their healing? Did they feel that they no longer needed God? They had the faith to obey Him in the first place, so what happened? Were they so concerned with their own feelings that they did not even give a thought to the One that healed them and take time to show their appreciation and thanksgiving to Him?

All obeyed Jesus Christ in what He told them to do, but only one went beyond in glorifying and thanking God. We should probably ask ourselves how are we on the thanksgiving portion in our lives?

The Samaritan thought about the awesome thing that had been done for him. He knew what it was like to live in fear of leprosy, to be scared of losing limbs, to be ostracized from family and friends and to live away from everybody and everything. He stopped and thought about what had been

done for him and gratefulness drove him to God. That gratefulness and appreciation actually drove him to God. Something interesting here was that nine people were healed, but only one was made whole (KJV). We will dig more into that in just a second.

That thanksgiving that the Samaritan truly felt made the connection complete and faith was born with the realization that Jesus Christ, God Himself, had healed him. Nobody else could do that and in rushing to thank God he established a contact with God that the other nine did not receive and it is because of his thankfulness. Thankfulness is special!

Jesus told him that his faithfulness made him whole. The meaning of this word whole means: to save; to deliver; to make whole; to preserve; to save from danger, loss, or destruction.

Something special took place here because of this Samaritan's deep thankfulness and perception—perceiving what God has done for us and what had taken place. The indication here was that this man was saved as one of God's firstfruits.

When we are in a thankful relationship with God, when we show love and honor to Him, God, as a loving parent, truly appreciates our thankfulness and it makes Him want to draw closer to us and to bless us.

Now why are we not as thankful as we should be? Part of it is because of the environment that we live in. Most of us are living a lifestyle that God did not intend for us. We live in houses jammed one right next to another, we commute to work in heavy traffic, some may have unrewarding jobs, we live in an environment that reflects the things of man in asphalt; and we also live in a society that has lost sight of God.

We see the world's problems deepening and do not see any signs of these problems getting better anytime soon. We feel hopeless and helpless to change what is taking place around us so is it any wonder that we do not feel as thankful as we should be. But being thankful requires thoughtful effort on our part.

It has been said, and is true, that the 4 steps of staying close and staying strong in God's church are prayer, Bible study, fasting, and meditation. All of these tips help us to draw closer to God, but there is one that helps us to have the thankful attitude more than the rest and that is meditation.

The definition of meditation is simply engaging in continuous thought to reflect on something; to really use one's mind. Isaac Newton said that "If I have done the public any service it is due to patient thought." Henry Ford is quoted as saying, "Thinking is the hardest work there is." That is probably why so few engage in it. It takes a lot of effort to think and to meditate.

We look back about 100 years ago and we see a nation of thinkers, those who read and studied. People that did not depend on public services for their livelihood or well-being. Men who knew how to repair their houses and other skills. They were a nation of reasoners and thinkers, people that truly wanted to learn things. This was the era before television, before prosperity and labor-saving devices, that we now "enjoy." Now we are a nation of people who want to be entertained. We live in an age where we let others do the thinking for us and the schools we send our children to do not teach the children to reason and analyze, they just teach them "facts." Because of the age we live in we can become superficial and that is not something that we want to do. Not seeing the greatness of God or what He is doing is a huge problem.

It is said that meditation is the gateway to the innermost thoughts of God and the excitement and the appreciation that comes from that. What does the world around us meditate on? We can look at what they meditate on by seeing what it produces. It meditates on perversions, hatred, wars, greed, and the results are broken homes, unwed mothers, gangs, and killings.

Turn over to Psalm 1. Here we have a contrast of those who meditate on what is correct and those that meditate on what is wrong.

Psalm 1:1-3 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by

the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

In other words, he is close to God and is thankful for all that God is doing. Then in verse 4 we see the contrast:

Psalm 1:4-6 The ungodly are not so, but *are* like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

David, a man after God's own heart, just marveled after the creation of God. Turn to Psalm 8.

Psalm 8:1-9 O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth, who have set Your glory above the heavens! Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants you have ordained strength, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger. When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? [He was just awestruck and this put David in right perspective with God.] For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen—even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas, O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!

David was awestruck by what God is doing with us, with mankind.

One area that we can focus on is God's creation to be uplifted, as David was. The seasons, the interdependence of creation, and also the wonderful bodies God has given us. All of this is truly amazing to ponder on!

Sometimes I like to go over the amazing characteristics of the human body. When you go over this you begin to see the love and care that God showed toward us. I will read this quote to you here:

God and His love toward us has given us a body that can run almost 25 mph; throw a ball over 100 mph. We have a heart that generates enough energy in 24 hours to lift 150,000 lbs or lift a locomotive one foot off the ground. It pumps 3,600 gallons of blood in the same period. At rest, it pumps 10 pints a minute, at exercise 30 pints, and it only weighs 8-12 oz and it should run well for 65-75 years.

Pretty awesome!

The 7 quarts of blood in our bodies is a delivery system that reaches every one of the billions of cells with crude oxygen and then carries away the waste. We have 60,000 miles of veins, arteries, capillaries. 25 trillion red cells, 25 billion white cells, 5 million hairs give or take a few, 650 muscles, 206 bones, 100 joints, 13 billion nerve cells, and finally we are covered with about 20 yards of a miracle fabric called skin that stretches and shrinks as we grow or as we shrink. If it gets cut or scratched it repairs itself.

It is truly awesome.

He has given us a brain that creates and reasons with enough connections in its memory to receive 10 new items of information every second of life. It uses more connections than all the phone companies in the world put together. Finally, He also gave us eyes that can outperform anything that man can create. Light waves pass through the retina, then God provided 130 million light gathering cells that causes a chemical change that gives us an image that we can see.

This goes on day after day and year after year.

Brethren, when we stop and think how fearfully and wonderfully made we are, it should cause to be deeply appreciative of God. And if we do not think that way, then we cease to be thankful. So mediation is a must if we are going to give proper thanks to God.

Now there is another area that keeps us from being thankful to God and that is the area of trials. Trials initially cause most of us to take our eyes off God and focus on the trial at hand and we cannot seem to focus on anything else.

In James 1:2 we are told, “count it all joy when we fall into various trials.” I am sure that most of us do not do this, we do not see God very easily, but we do see our problems very easily. We all, from time to time, must be thrown into trials because God uses these to test us, to guide us, and to shape us. A remarkable example of faith during a trial is in Daniel 6:7-10.

The situation here was the presidents of the kingdom were lining up to destroy Daniel. Daniel was popular, he was the chief president, but they could not find a thing wrong with him, so they devised a plan to have the king sign a law with the Persians and the Medes that for thirty days they could not petition any god except the king.

Daniel 6:7-10 All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter.” Therefore King Darius signed the written decree. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

What he is saying here is that on that very day, Daniel went on His knees with the curtains open to worship God, as he had always done. People have come up with all kinds of justifications here, like he could have pulled the

curtains to hide the fact he was going against the king's law, but the main point is that Daniel knew the power and sovereignty of God and he was close to God; he left the curtains open and gave God thanks in the midst of trial. Of course, God has His ways of working things out and those who tried to get Daniel ended up in the lions den and were consumed as well as their families.

Now what is there to be thankful for in a trial? I think we have to realize that in a trial God, our Father who loves us, is working with us. Turn to I Corinthians 11.

I Corinthians 11:31-32 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

Many times trials come upon us to shape and change us so that we will not be condemned with the world around us, that is how God will correct us.

Psalms 119:67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.

This shows that the affliction caused this man to stop and think about what he was doing, then he turned around and went the right way.

God will also give us a trial for our growth and also for the benefit of others. Turn to Philippians 1, verse 12. This is the case of Paul when he was put into prison.

Philippians 1:12-14 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Here Paul was saying that he was in prison, he was in trial, but yet his trial was so encouraging to the brethren and there were positive benefits from it.

Paul being put into prison informed all the palace guards and the rest of the people of what he stood for as he was defending the gospel of Jesus Christ, and he was thankful to be used by God in this way.

You have heard Mr. Armstrong talk about Albert Hubbard's handbook, written back in the early 1900s, and it was a collection of the best minds, the finest minds of that age and the previous age as well. There was an author that lived in the 1800s, Albert W. Newcome, wrote a short essay on being thankful for the lessons learned in trial. It is entitled "A Man's Thanksgiving," and it reads:

God of common sense, I give you thanks for the heavy blows of pain that drive me back from the perilous ways into harmony with the laws of my being. For the stinging whips of hunger and cold that urge bitter striving and better achievement. For the steepness and roughness of the way and the staunch virtues gained by climbing over jagged rocks of hardship and stumbling through dark and pathless sleuths of discouragement. And for the acid blight of failure that has burned out of me all thought of easy victory and toughened my sinews for fiercer battles and greater triumphs.

I thank you for mistakes that I have made and the priceless lessons that I have learned from them. For disillusion and disappointment that had cleared my vision has spurred my desire for strong appetites and passion and the power they give under pressure and control. I thank you for my imperfections that give me keen delight in striving toward perfection. God of common good and human brotherhood, I give you thanks for the silent songs of temptation that lure and untangle, and the understanding of other men they reveal. To the weaknesses and failings of my neighbors and the joy of lending a helping hand. For my own shortcomings, sorrows and loneliness that give me deeper sympathy for others. For ingratitude and misunderstanding and for the gladness and service without other reward than self-expression.

It is very apparent that this man was very thankful for the trials that life had given him because of the growth and the understanding that they produced.

So even in trial, you can be thankful for what God is doing with you, because God is sovereign. He loves you; He has called you for a specific purpose, you are His Family and He has every right to correct you; to love you; to test you; and to train you in doing so.

God wants us to be thankful when we come to Him with our needs. Turn to Philippians 4. Whenever I would be put into a pressure situation I would always think of this scripture.

Philippians 4:4-9 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, 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 understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Looking at this particular set of scriptures, I used to find myself in situations that would scare me, and I would always read this because it said “do not be anxious,” God will hear your prayer and give you the peace that surpasses all understanding.

Verse 4, Rejoice in God, His law, and His promises, your calling and the fact that He is working with you. Rejoice in that and keep that in your mind. Then he said to restrain your conduct, it should always reflect God. Then do not be anxious for the things in this present life. Now this does not mean that we can say, “I don’t have to work or pay my bills.” Rather, it means that we are to have such confidence in God, in His power and His love towards us that our mind will be free from anxiety. Whatever your wants are, your hopes and fears are, they can be put before God. “Then with “prayer and supplication. . . along with thanksgiving.” Supplication here means with intensity—a prayer with much intensity.

Barnes' Notes brings out: "When you pray, if you are ill, take time to thank God for your past healings and that will give you confidence. If you are in need, thank God for supplying your past needs." In other words, he is saying here you are filled with anxiety and concern, but he says go back and look at what God has done for you in the past. If you have concern over the well being of your children and family, thank God for His past protection of them, and if you have sinned, thank God for Jesus Christ and His intercession for you.

This is what he means to pray with thanksgiving. We should always thank God for working with us, that we may be in His Family and the office that He has prepared for us. He said when we do this make our request known to Him. God knows what we need, but He wants us to come into a personal relationship with Him and to tell Him our requests. He wants us to be one on one with Him and He wants us to give thanks for all that He has done.

Then he says "the peace that surpasses all understanding," the peace that comes from having committed our needs to God and trusting that He will always do what is right, in supplying our desires. This peace comes from the faith that God has heard our prayers and has answered our requests as is best for us. When we know that it removes all anxiety from our thoughts through the intervention of Jesus Christ.

We know we have gone to God; we know that God exists, we know that He is sovereign, and that He has called us, we know that He loves us and so we present our request to Him with thanksgiving and we can trust Him to help carry our burdens. Then God tells us in addition to think on what will produce a thankful and uplifting attitude, take our mind off the trial. He wants us to see what is true, what is our reality, the Kingdom of God is our future. Think on honorable and worthy things and things that are just, how to live rightly, what is pure, right, and true and lovely. The term lovely here means what is dear to anyone, what is pleasing and amiable.

A good report, respect for parents, purity between men and women, kindness and patience to everyone in the church of God, virtue and praise and anything else worth noticing, do so and follow the example. He said "think on these things, meditate on these things." Let their positiveness encourage you and be thankful for them.

Brethren, we owe our very being to God, He has blessed us with loved ones plus He has blessed us with a wonderful calling and the opportunity to be a member of the God Family. Our abilities come from God as a gift. Our health, our mind, our understanding, all the physical blessings that we enjoy; plus He sees that we are educated to living His way of life.

Each of us should be thankful for the special interest that God is taking in each of us at this time in the greater church of God. We should be thankful for everything that God has given us, and we are to be thankful for all that God is doing. And even though it can be a tough pill to swallow, we are to be thankful for Worldwide Church of God breaking up, we are to be thankful for the confusion and soul searching that is taking place at this time with so many of our brethren. We are to be thankful for the various groups that are formed for God's people that they might be taken care of.

And we are to be thankful for the terrible condition that the world is in. God is not going to bring a flood at this time on the people. He is going to handle it differently and therefore why we should be thankful is that we have come to realize that God is sovereign and causes or allows these things to take place for His final purpose of saving mankind. His decisions are perfect, and we can be thankful for the decisions that He is making at this time.

There is one more thing that we can be thankful for and that is a gift that has been given to each of us, and that is we have each other. God has placed us here in His church and this can be a difficult thing sometimes because although we are 99.9 percent perfect, the one tenth of one percent seems to cause problems from time to time.

God made the decision to put us here and we must work to deeply appreciate each other because that is another gift from God, that we are a family and that we are together.

How do we thank God? The first way is to express our thanks verbally in our prayers for all that God is and all that He has done and all that He is doing for mankind. This should be a part of our daily prayer. Ingratitude is so terrible that we would probably do well to go a little overboard in offering thanks in our prayers.

The second way we show thanks is by taking care of what God has given us. If you buy your child a toy, you want to see them take care of it, it shows you that they appreciate the gift. Same thing with us. God wants us to take care of our personal possessions that He gives us. Even our bodies, we are to take care of our bodies that God gave us. The way that we take care of what He gives at this time reflect how we will take care of them in the world tomorrow when God gives you cities or whatever He has planned for you to take care of.

Another thing that we need to take care of is our calling that God has given us. We do so by obedience to God and with diligence in prayer, fasting, meditation, and by making sure that we are in daily contact with God. We come to church every Sabbath, we listen to the sermons, but what do we do the rest of the week? We all have to answer that for ourselves. Do we do our personal part to study and be in a close relationship with God?

That sounds remedial, like I am talking to a school child, but yet I know that there are those who do not pray, and do not put their time into study and who just sort of float along. The thing is that we have been given the calling by God, the greatest calling that anyone can imagine to be the very sons of God and be in the Kingdom of God, and yet we think that we can slip by not establishing a relationship with God. It cannot be done! When we do not maintain that relationship, we are telling God that we are not appreciative of the calling that He has given us, that we really do not care.

How do we thank God for each other? By being patient, not being backbiting, by showing kindness and concern for one another, by esteeming others to be better than ourselves, this includes husbands, wives, children—all people.

I knew a pastor who used to ask, “What do you deserve?” By that he meant God did not give us what we truly deserve, which is death, but rather He gives us mercy, and in His love and kindness opens our eyes to the truth and called us for His wonderful purpose. God has not given us what we actually deserve.

Turn to Psalm 136. This is a psalm we do not read too often because it talks about His mercy enduring forever in every verse, but I will summarize it for you.

Psalm 136:1-26 To Him who alone does great wonders. . . . to Him who by wisdom made the heavens. . . . to Him who laid out the earth above the waters. . . . to Him who made great lights. . . . the sun to rule by day. . . . the moon and stars to rule by night. . . . to Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn. . . . and brought out Israel from among them. . . . with a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm. . . . to Him who divided the Red Sea in two. . . . and made Israel pass through the midst of it. . . . but overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. . . . to Him who led His people through the wilderness. . . . to Him who struck down great kings. . . . and slew famous kings. . . . Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan. . . . and gave their land as a heritage. . . . a heritage to Israel His servant. . . . who remembered us in our lowly state. . . . and rescued us from our enemies. . . . who gives food to all flesh. . . . oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures forever.

This is the God that we are to be giving thanks to, and as we are God's people and have so much more understanding than anyone else, we should be much more thankful. Isaiah 2:6-22 talks about the correction that is going to come upon Israel. The proud and unthankful people are going to be brought down and humbled until they turn to God. We do not want to be a part of that correction.

Finally, there is a scripture with a message that God gives to His elect.

Colossians 3:12-15 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. [What that means is, similar to a director of an organization, a director of your activities and

thinking, He said let peace be the director and the ruling factor.]
And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you
were called in one body; and be thankful.