

# Thankfulness

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More than 19 centuries ago, God inspired the apostle Paul to predict today's global attitudes and write them down to warn us: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves . . . *unthankful*, unholy" (II Timothy 3:1-2). Today, most people are self-centered, discontent, and ungrateful. At best, many think about giving thanks only once each year—and then only because Thanksgiving Day forces them to consider it.

Because we must live in this world, we can be very heavily influenced by this ungrateful society's attitudes. Do we really appreciate all that we have been given? Are we sincerely thankful to our great God for the many blessings He has so liberally poured out upon us? In this month's study, we will see that God *wants* us to show our gratitude to Him. It is one of our Christian duties. We will also see that God has given us instructions on how we can truly be thankful.

1. Is it God's will that we be thankful? I Thessalonians 5:18; Colossians 3:15.

**Comment:** Jesus Christ is the mediator and revealer of God's will, and even He is subject to it (Luke 22:42). It is the will of God that we be thankful in every condition, in adversity as well as prosperity (James 1:2-3, 12).

2. To whom should we be thankful? I Corinthians 15:57; II Corinthians 9:15; Psalm 50:14; I Timothy 1:12. In whose name and through whom should we give thanks? Ephesians 5:20; Romans 1:8; Colossians 3:17; Hebrews 13:15.

**Comment:** We should be thankful to the God the Father first, then God the Son, giving thanks in the name of Jesus Christ. All thanksgiving should be expressed through Christ.

3. How often should we give thanks to God? I Thessalonians 2:13; Psalm 119:62.

**Comment:** The principle of thanking God without ceasing means often and for everything. Anytime is appropriate. Nevertheless, the principle of balance holds true as well. Thanksgiving would be just vain repetition if we thoughtlessly repeated our thankfulness all day. Conversely, ingratitude is a deadly but common sin. Human beings tend to neglect giving God proper gratitude more than being excessively thankful (Romans 1:20-21).

4. Are we obligated to be thankful for our brethren? II Thessalonians 1:3; 2:13; Ephesians 1:15-16; Philippians 1:3-4; I Thessalonians 1:2.

**Comment:** Through the apostle Paul's example, we see that it is our duty to be thankful for each other on a constant basis. It is difficult to be upset with someone while at the same time thanking God that he is our brother in Christ.

5. What can we be thankful for about each other? Philippians 1:3-5; Romans 1:8; 6:17; II Thessalonians 1:3; II Corinthians 8:16.

**Comment:** Spurred by outgoing concern for others, we can be thankful for the faith of Christ exhibited in them, their conversion, the true love they show through obedience to His Word, the earnest care or zeal exhibited by them for the brethren and God's work. The list is endless (II Corinthians 9:11).

6. Is thankfulness offered as a spiritual sacrifice? Psalm 107:21-22; 116:17; 50:14; Jonah 2:9. Is it given in combination with other spiritual sacrifices? Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2; Psalm 92:1; Hebrews 13:15.

**Comment:** As a spiritual sacrifice, thanksgiving can be offered in the form of a prayer and/or praise. Prayer, praise, and thanksgiving are almost inseparable, and they are most often offered together. Thankfulness is a peace offering (Leviticus 7:11-13). It produces peace (I Timothy 2:1-2).

7. How important will thankfulness be in the Kingdom of God? Revelation 4:8-11; 7:11-12.

**Comment:** In Revelation 7 we see that a main theme in the Kingdom at the throne of God is thankfulness. This song of the angels, elders, and the four living creatures shows the reverence that all have in God's presence. There are seven aspects of praise listed here in this spiritual worship of God. Seven signifies totality and completeness. Thankfulness comprises part of this list. In great contrast to this present evil world's gross ingratitude, God has revealed to those who will listen and act that thankfulness is a duty to which the elect of God are bound. Praise and thank God for all His works and for providing brethren by whom we can be encouraged. By developing a thankful attitude now, we prepare ourselves for the soon-coming Kingdom of God.