

The Old Paths

Volume 20, Issue 39

November 24, 2013

“Thanksgiving”

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Lord willing, this coming Thursday, we will be celebrating the national holiday of Thanksgiving. Mr. Webster defines “thanksgiving” as follows: “1. the act of giving thanks; grateful acknowledgement of benefits or favors, esp. to God. 2. an expression of thanks, esp. to God. 3. a public celebration in acknowledgement of divine favor or kindness. 4. a day set apart for giving thanks to God. 5. (cap.) U.S. see Thanksgiving Day.” Thanksgiving Day: “1. (in the United States) a national holiday for giving thanks to God, now observed on the fourth Thursday of November. 2. (in Canada) a national holiday for giving thanks to God, observed on the second Monday of October.”

Did you notice something consistent with each of the above definitions? Each definition made reference to God! From man’s early history, he has spent time in gratitude to God. Since the time of the pilgrims, there have been days of “thanksgiving” celebrated in this country as well. During Abraham Lincoln’s presidency, a national day of “thanksgiving” was established, and has been celebrated annually in this country ever since.

It is great that we live in a nation that was founded upon the principles of godliness and thanking God for our bounty. We must also understand that “thanksgiving” is not a one-time-a-year, or one-day thing!

Thanksgiving to God needs to be a way of life (I Thess. 5:18; Eph. 5:20; Ps. 34:1)! In fact, the word “thanksgiving” is something we find time and again in the Bible. Let us study about gratitude toward God and see how we measure up.

We Need To Give God Thanks For Our Physical Blessings.

In Acts 17:24-28, we learn that God created and sustains us. God “made the world and everything in it.” He “gives to all mankind life and breath and everything For in him we live and move and have our being.” In reading Revelation 4:11, we hear the 24 elders praising God and saying, “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” In other words, man exists, and we are here at this time, because God *wanted* us! This ought to make us thankful to God!

Once we understand that we can do nothing for (or by) ourselves, we will be thankful to God as well! David said, “I wash mine hands in innocence and go around your altar, O LORD, proclaiming thanksgiving aloud, and telling of all your wonderful deeds” (Ps. 26:6-7). Later, we read, “It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O most High” (Ps. 92:1). Are you willing to thank God for physical things and “tell of His wonderful works”? Paul wrote: “You will be enriched in every way to

be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God” (II Cor. 9:11-12).

For what should we be thankful? Let us be found thanking God for our food (Mk. 8:1-9; I Tim. 4:1-5); our life, strength, and health (Acts 17:28); our marriage, if we are married (This is a physical blessing from God, Matt. 22:30.); and our children (Ps. 127:3) just to name a few blessings in this life! Are we thankful to God for these things?

We Need To Give God Thanks For Our Spiritual Blessings.

When reading the Bible, we see that gratitude for spiritual blessings is an overwhelming theme! We need to take note of the gratitude shown by the men of God and make it our own!

David was grateful for such spiritual blessings as: the coming Lord, God’s holiness, God Himself, and God’s mercy (Ps. 110:4, 30:4, 12, 106:1; I Chron. 16:4, 7). The apostle Paul showed gratitude for: God Himself, being a partaker of God’s inheritance, the brethren he knew, for God’s “unspeakable gift,” those who received the truth, and for being put “into the ministry” (Col. 1:3, 12; Rom. 1:8, 16:1-4; II Cor. 9:15; I Thess. 2:13; I Tim. 1:12). Jesus thanked God for things on numerous occasions. One such time was when He “gave thanks” in instituting the Lord’s Supper, which to us is a spiritual blessing! (Matt. 26:26-27). Righteous Anna gave thanks for the spiritual blessing that is Jesus Christ, for He brought salvation to all men (Lk. 2:36-38)! Daniel is another example of one who was thankful for spiritual blessings. In Daniel 2:20-23, we find him thanking

God that he had the ability to discern and explain Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Brethren, how grateful are we for our spiritual blessings we enjoy in Christ (Eph. 1:3)? Truly, they are many!

How May We Express Our Thanksgiving To God?

Some may say: "I am grateful, but I am not sure how I can thank God." Below are three ways we can show our gratitude toward God.

We can express our gratitude to God through word of mouth. David said, "**Proclaiming thanksgiving aloud, and telling of all your wondrous deeds**" (Ps. 26:7). Later, he said, "*Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy*" (Ps. 107:21-22).

We can also express our gratitude to God through songs. I Chronicles 16 records a psalm David delivered in gratitude and praise to God for the return of the ark. Psalm 69:30 says, "*I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving.*" Later, David said, "*Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving, let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise*" (Ps. 95:2).

A third way to express our gratitude toward God is through prayer. Philippians 4:6 teaches the brethren to express their gratitude to God in this way. Jesus showed gratitude to God through prayer (Matt. 26:26-27; Mk. 8:6; Jn. 11:41-42). The apostle Paul expressed his gratitude to God in prayer on several occasions as well (Acts 27:35; Rom. 1:8; II Tim. 1:3; Col. 1:3).

These expressions of gratitude can be done in **both** public and private settings. The Holy Spirit calls this a "*sacrifice of praise*" (Heb.

13:15). Now that we know how to show gratitude to God, let us be about doing this daily!

The Results Of Ingratitude

Gratitude toward God is not an option! We are commanded and expected to properly thank God for what He has done and given to us (I Thess. 5:18; Col. 3:15). When people have the attitude that gratitude is an option, they soon stop being as thankful to God as they once were. In fact, this has happened in many places, and some seem to think that they are OWED certain things merely because they are alive! **Not So!!!**

What is the result of ingratitude? Some seem to believe there are no consequences to suffer for ingratitude. This is wrong. The results of ingratitude are seen in Romans 1:18-32. Why is it that God "*gave them (the Gentiles, JJ) up (over, NAS)*" to uncleanness, vile passions, and a reprobate mind? His reasons are found in Romans 1:21: "*For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God, or gave thanks to him*"!!

To keep God from giving us up, and to stop us from ultimately being the kind of people who do "*not like to retain God in (our) knowledge*"; let us be thankful and praise God for His wonderful works!

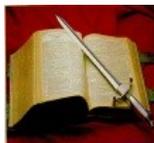
Some Questions About Gratitude.

1. "**To whom** are we to be thankful?" We must be thankful to God (II Cor. 4:15).
2. "To what **extent** are we to be grateful?" "...**abounding in thanksgiving**" (Col. 2:7).
3. "What should our **attitude** be toward gratitude?" Our attitude should be one of sacrifice. David said, "*I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call on the name of the LORD*" (Ps. 116:17).
 - ♦ The Holy Spirit called it the "*sacrifice of praise*" in Hebrews 13:15.
4. "How **widespread** should our gratitude be?" Paul said, "*I urge that, ... supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings, be made for **all people**; for kings, and for **all** who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life*" (I Tim. 2:1-2).
 - ♦ What does "all" mean?

Conclusion

How grateful are we to God? After considering all the blessings we enjoy in this life, how can we **not** be grateful to God? When we realize God's blessings come down upon us daily, then we can understand how gratitude is not a one-time occasion, but a life-long practice!!

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