

Thanksgiving in the Scriptures

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In everything be giving thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (I Thessalonians 5:18, CLT).

Thanksgiving should not be confined to feasting on a particular day set aside by presidential proclamation. In the Scriptures the giving of thanks is not exclusively reserved for one special day or limited to one specific thing. Rather, every time we give thanks we are holding a thanksgiving or a *eucharist*.

EUCHARIST: ITS ELEMENTS AND MEANING

Eucharist is a Greek word transliterated, rather than translated, into English. Its two elements are the prefix *eu*, “well,” and the root *charis*, “joy,” “benefit,” “favor.”¹ Each one of us, when he is giving thanks, is having a *eucharist* or thanksgiving.

A PHARISEE’S EUCHARIST

Two men went up into the sanctuary to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a tribute collector. Now the Pharisee, standing, prayed this to himself: “O God, I am thanking you that I am not even as the rest of men ... or even as this man, the tribute collector (Luke 18:10-11).

Here is a Pharisaical *eucharist*. He prayed to himself, not to God. He gave thanks that he was not as other men, especially this publican.

1. *Concordant Key-Word Concordance*, p. 301.

This may have been true, but he was not as *the Man*, and so was short of God's standard, deficient of His glory (Romans 3:23).

He should have taken his place beside the tax collector, who would not lift his eyes to heaven but beat his breast, saying, "O God, be propitiated to me, the sinner!" The Lord tells us which of these two descended to his house, justified.

SOME OF PAUL'S EUCHARISTS

For the Believers at Rome:

The apostle Paul held many thanksgivings. When writing to the Romans (1:8), he holds a *eucharist* of his own when he informs them that he, first, is thanking his God through Jesus Christ concerning them, that their faith is being announced in the whole world.

For the Believers at Corinth:

When writing to the believers at Corinth he conducts a *eucharist* in the first chapter of his first letter to them. He tells them he is thanking God concerning them for the grace which is given them in Christ Jesus, seeing that they were enriched in everything in Him, so that they were not deficient in a single grace.

As a Prisoner:

Paul turned all of his experiences into occasions for declaring or expressing thanksgiving to God, through Christ Jesus, the Lord.

When, on his way to Rome as a prisoner he was met at the Appii Forum and Three Taverns by brothers beloved in Christ. Their presence was a source of encouragement to Paul, and he took courage, thanking God (Acts 28:15).

For Rescue Out of Darkness:

Paul was specific in his thanksgiving, as may be seen from his giving thanks to God the Father, Who makes us

Competent for a part of the allotment of the saints, in light, Who rescues us out of the jurisdiction of Darkness, and transports us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in Whom we are having deliverance (Colossians 1:12-14).

With a Plea for an Open Door:

Paul asked the Colossian believers in their prayers to

Be persevering, watching in it with thanksgiving, praying at the same time concerning him also, that God should be opening for him a door of the Word, to speak the secret of Christ, that he

should be making it manifest, as he must speak (Colossians 4:2-4).

For All Mankind:

In these days of stress and strain we are apt to overlook this thanksgiving. Here we are entreated,

First of all, that petitions, prayers, pleadings, thanksgiving be made for all mankind.

Here is a thanksgiving not confined to any family, to any nation, to any color, to any continent. Thanksgiving is to be for the entire human race,

For kings and all those in a superior station, that we may be leading a mild and quiet life in all devoutness and gravity, for this is ideal and welcome before God our Savior, Who wills all mankind to be saved and to come into a realization of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and mankind, a Man, Christ Jesus, Who is giving Himself a correspondent Ransom for all (I Timothy 2:1-6).

For All Things:

Giving thanks always for all things (Ephesians 5:20).

Here is another thanksgiving held before us for emulation. We are sometimes found thanking God for what we consider to be His good gifts, but this verse draws no such invidious distinction; for He is making all to be working together for the good (Romans 8:28).

We are asked to be giving thanks to God, as Father, always, for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In view of our celestial calling and citizenship, our celestial blessings serve to inure to us both drudgery and affliction. Were you just as thankful and trustful when you had no job, as you are for the position you now have? Will you be giving thanks whether your investments are profitable or profitless? When you were ill, did you give thanks then, as you give thanks now for the degree of health you enjoy? Were you resentful at the loss of a loved one or did you *give thanks* (Job 1:21)?

**THANKSGIVING TRANSMUTES
BASE METAL INTO GOLD**

We are told that in everything,

Whatever we may be doing in word and in act, to let all be done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God, the Father, through Him (Colossians 3:17).

No task is so menial but that His presence can dignify it. No position is so high but that His presence will serve to humble us. Every task should be performed with an eye single to His glory.

The work of a housewife will not be drudgery when she makes every motion a *eucharist*, a thanksgiving to Him. The clerk in the store will cheerfully do his allotted task, making every moment a

eucharist, giving thanks to Him for the measure of health and strength which He gives for the work. The teacher will use every classroom full of wriggling scholars as an opportunity to hold a *eucharist*, giving thanks to Him for the priceless privilege of making Him known to their formative minds and receptive hearts by lip and life.

BE CONTENT IN WHATSOEVER STATE YOU ARE

In the calling wherewith God called you, therein remain (I Corinthians 7:17b-24). Whether you are a professional person or a day laborer, there is purpose in His placing you in that job, in that city, with an inner circle of friends you alone can reach and influence.

In whatsoever state you now find yourself, be not only content, but thankful (Philippians 4:11).

Be content with your wages (Luke 3:14).

Having food and raiment let us be content (I Timothy 6:8).

Be content with such things as you have (Hebrews 13:5).

Godliness with contentment is said to be “*great gain*” (I Timothy 6:6).

The indwelling All-Sufficient One will make you self-sufficient in all ways and in all places. Doctor, lawyer, merchant, cook – all are His appointments, and His grace has provided a task in which He shall be glorified in your conduct and disposition during times filled with bane and with blessing, for which you should be giving thanks always.

GOD’S WILL: THANKSGIVING IN EVERYTHING

In everything be giving thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (I Thessalonians 5:18).

Paul penned these words, and he practiced what he preached. In Romans he writes of those who were made vain in their reasonings, and darkened as to their unintelligent hearts, because they failed to glorify God as God or to thank Him (1:21). This led to their changing the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of a corruptible man and flying creatures and quadrupeds and reptiles. Wherefore God gives them over to uncleanness (:24), to dishonorable passions (:26), and to a disqualified mind (:28). Such are the depths to which unthankful and ungrateful hearts can descend.

PERSEVERING IN PRAYER WITH THANKSGIVING

Here is yet another *eucharist*: when persevering in prayer we are to be watching in it with thanksgiving. Yet someone may want to ask, “How shall I be giving thanks to Him when I do not know

when He will answer or what He will send?” The answer is, “You can trust the Man Who died for you. Every gift is dispensed with nail-pierced hands, and He Who spared not His only Son, His best gift, will surely not give you anything unworthy of His Best.”

We are not always aware what we should be praying for, but we do know that the Spirit is pleading for us with inarticulate groanings. Surely what is requested by His Spirit will be for our weal, not our woe, for the Spirit is pleading for the saints in accord with God’s will for the believing and trusting saint (Romans 8:26-27).

THANKSGIVING BEFORE, NOT AFTER, IS THE ANSWER

In another of Paul’s letters, this one from prison, we are told to let our requests be made known to God with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6).

Even our requests are to be a *eucharist* for the time and manner in which He shall be pleased to answer or not answer. Yet He should have our thanksgiving from the heart *before*, as well as after, thus showing Him our unqualified confidence in His person, His power, His promise and His performance. Have not His dealings with us in the past proven His trustworthiness? Have we any valid reason for doubting His dealings with us in the future? On the basis of past performance we can trust His future performance. In all of our prayers and petitions, let them ascend to Him savored with our thanksgiving for His goodness, regardless of the answer.

He cannot have taught us
To trust in His name;
And thus far have brought us,
To put us to shame!

Let the peace of Christ be arbitrating in your heart, and become thankful. Let the Word of Christ be making its home in you richly, in all wisdom. And whatsoever you may be doing, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God (Colossians 3:15-17).

As, then, you accepted Christ Jesus, the Lord, be walking in Him, having been rooted and built up in Him, and being confirmed in the faith according as you were taught, superabounding in it with thanksgiving (Colossians 2:6-7).

THANKSGIVING FOR THE GIFT OF GENEROSITY

In II Corinthians 9:12 we have a thanksgiving easy to overlook. It is time we looked at the gift of generosity through the eyes of God Who set us the example in the gift of His Best, the only-begotten Son (John 3:16; Romans 8:32). Generosity should be the means of producing through us a thanksgiving to God.

God does not want gifts from us to produce sorrow, nor a feeling of compulsion, for God is loving a gleeful giver. He it is Who supplies us with that with which we have been entrusted. He wants

us to return some of it so that the act of generosity will enrich our lives. Our giving does not add anything to God's fortune, for He possesses all. Yet, in the act of replenishing the wants of the saints, the generosity of gleefully giving produces through us a thanksgiving to God for His glory. It gladdens His heart that His sons love Him and give to the needs of His saints and to the support of His drudges, not out of compulsion, nor sorrowfully, nor as the result of a funny story, but rather because of His example in the Gift of all gifts – His Son.

OUR LORD'S THANKSGIVING AGAINST THAT BLACK NIGHT OF HIS BETRAYAL

Jesus, in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread and *gave thanks* (Luke 22:17). The life of Christ was a daily delight to His God and Father. It was a life always thankful for all things. The greatest test of His desire always to be thankful came in the night in which He was given up into the hands of sinful men and betrayed with a kiss by one of His own apostles, Judas Iscariot. It was in that blackest of nights that His thanksgiving shines with the brightest of light.

Having loved His Own who were in the world, He loves them to the end (John 13:1-19). He girded Himself with a towel and washed their feet. He also counseled them, prayed for them, sang a hymn with them, and in Gethsemane suffered them to sleep when He asked them to stay awake.

In that darkest night, He gave thanks for His body which was to be broken and for His soul which was to be poured out to death. What a seemingly inauspicious occasion for the giving of thanks!

Have you suffered betrayal at the hand of a trusted friend? Can you still give thanks to the Lord? Have you had to face a black night because of some slander which was thoughtlessly believed by those you thought to be your friends? Can you still give thanks to Him? When you are reviled, do you retaliate or do you give thanks to Him? When someone causes you suffering, do you threaten, murmur and complain, or do you give thanks to Him?

HE LOVED AND GAVE THANKS FOR JUDAS, THOMAS, PETER

Peter, who at first refused to have his feet washed by Jesus; Peter, who cursed, swore and renounced his Lord while warming himself at the camp-fire of the enemy; Peter, who remembered the towel with which Jesus girded Himself, and who later calls our attention to the servile apron of humility with which we are all to be girded (I Peter 5:5); Peter, who wept bitterly at one look from the face of the thorn-crowned Jesus; Peter, second in the race with John to the empty tomb but first to go inside; Peter, who went fishing and took the rest with him, is the same Peter who portrays Christ as the One Who did not revile when He was reviled, Who did not threaten when suffering, Who committed His case to the One Who judges all of this justly – it is this same Peter who writes the wonderful words which follow.

Be all of a like disposition, sympathetic, fond of the brethren, tenderly compassionate, of a humble disposition, not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but, on the contrary, blessing, seeing that you were called for this, that you should be enjoying the allotment of blessing, for he

who is wanting to love life and be acquainted with good days, let his tongue cease from evil and his lips speak no guile. Now let him avoid evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it, for the eyes of the Lord are on the just and His ears are for their petition, yet the face of the Lord is on evil doers. And is there anyone who will be ill-treating you, if you should become zealous of good? Yet if you may be suffering also because of righteousness, happy are you. Now you should not be afraid with their fear, nor yet be disturbed, yet hallow the Lord Christ in your hearts, ever ready with a defense for everyone who is demanding from you an account concerning the expectation in you, but with meekness and fear, having a good conscience, that, in what they are speaking against you as of evildoers, they may be mortified, who traduce your good behavior in Christ. For it is better to be suffering for doing good, if the will of God may be willing, than for doing evil (I Peter 3:8-17, CLT).

SUPERABOUND IN THANKSGIVING

The *eucharist* does not lie in any church, or in any special method of observing it. When is the last time you held a thanksgiving to the Lord for all of the blessings and benefits He so freely bestows on us through His Son, for Whom in all ages to come our greatest *eucharist* shall rise?

Superabound in thanksgiving to the glory of God! This is the will of God concerning you: in everything be giving thanks.

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