

“Why We Should Be Thankful: Part One”

The Thanksgiving-Christmas-New Year season is often associated with times of celebration and family get togethers and expressions of gratitude toward God for His many blessings.

God’s gifts come in a variety of forms, at various times, often providing or supplementing what we need, and sometimes, with totally unexpected blessings-- day by day, year after year.

James 1:17, “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. **18**, In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.”

1Peter 2:9, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

God doesn’t save us because we are wise, strong, rich, handsome, or influential people; He chooses us in our weaknesses, so that we will testify to the world how the holy God of Creation is reconciling lost sinners to Himself.

1Corinthians 1:18, “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” **26-31**, “For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

2Corinthians 5:17-21, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

2Peter 1:2-3, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”

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God desires for us to personally know Him now and forever!

John 1:1-3, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” **14**, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” **18**, “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.”

As Christians we have everything we need to personally know and to grow in a relationship with God, now and forever, in Christ. We do this by understanding, obeying, and proclaiming God’s Word through our lives.

God expresses His uncompromising love toward those who believe in and follow Him, granting us the privilege of being His witnesses on the earth, while allowing us to come to Him in heaven, anytime, in prayer, so (**Hebrews 10:22a**), “let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith,” (**Colossians 4:2**), “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*.”

Paul expands on the importance of prayer (**Philippians 4:6-7**), “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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Have you ever gone to God in prayer, and you begin thanking Him for all the wonderful things He has created for you to see, touch, taste, smell, hear, and experience, e.g., sunsets, sunrises, birds, fish, animals, insects, flowers, trees, clouds, breezes, rivers, lakes, beaches, and oceans; but most important, the awesome hope we have of eternity in heaven with God.

Today, we will consider two of God’s blessings: Our relationship with God through Salvation. Our relationship with the family and friends God has given us..

Salvation... Before coming to Christ we are spiritually dead, guilty of sin, condemned to hell, basically hopeless; but God, in His mercy and kindness, provides forgiveness for sin through Jesus Christ (cf **Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 8:1; 10:9-10, 13**).

God wants everyone to be saved, for no one to go to hell (**1Timothy 2:3-4**), “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth,” (**2Peter 3:9**), “The Lord... is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

No wonder Paul declares (**2Corinthians 9:15**), “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”

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God’s has provided everything we need to know Him, to live for Him now, and to trust Him to bring us into heaven to be with Him for eternity: He has revealed Himself to us in and through Jesus Christ, who is (**John 14:6**), “**the only way**” [to God: *through Jesus’ death and resurrection*]; “**the only truth**” [from God: Jesus is the Living Word of God, as recorded in the 66 Books of the Bible], “**and the only life**” [with God: made effectual through God’s Spirit living in each person who is born of God for the purpose of serving Him], “**no one comes to the Father but through [Him].**”

As you serve the Lord you will experience difficult times (**2Timothy 3:12**), “Indeed, all who desire to live godly [lives] in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

Paul who suffered greatly because of Christ said (**2Corinthians 12:10**), “I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (**Philippians 4:12-13**), “I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me,” **19**, “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

God will see us through our struggles if we hold fast, trusting Him, seeking to honor and obey God’s Word. **James 1:2-4**, “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,”

(**2Corinthians 4:7-9**), “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; *we are* afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed,” **16**, “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.”

It is often during times of struggle that we will experience God’s presence like never before, enabling us to serve God sacrificially, while also empowering us to be more compassionate toward others.

2Corinthians 1:3-4, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

Family & Friends... We often receive comfort and encouragement from the family and friends God gives us, and although we might not express our thankfulness to God for them, they are definitely gifts from God.

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My best friend, Nancy, is also my wife; and God has blessed us with four children, six grandchildren, one daughter-in-law, and one son-in-law. And God is so gracious to have given both, Nancy and myself, Christian parents who have been a blessing to our children and grandchildren; although now, all four of our parents, one of our children and two of our grandchildren are with the Lord in heaven..

God also blesses us with many brothers and sisters in Christ, who encourage and exhort us to live by faith, as children of God and citizens of God’s kingdom.

We all have family, friends, and acquaintances, but true Christian family and friends are sent from God to share our journey on this earth (**Proverbs 18:24**), “A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

The Bible says true friends tell us the truth, not necessarily what we want to hear, even if it temporarily hurts us (**Proverbs 27:6**), “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.”

God is so good to provide family and friends during our life on earth, some with whom we will share eternity in heaven; but the best friend God provides, is His own Son, Jesus Christ, who, although He is the KING of Kings and LORD of Lords, the Creator and Judge over all, He calls us His friends (cf **John 15:15**), “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

During this season of Thanks-Giving, please consider the many blessings God has given you, and take time to thank God for each one of them, especially for the Gift of Salvation, and for Gift of Family and Friends.

Salvation is by Grace, through Faith in Jesus Christ who took our punishment for sin, so that we might receive forgiveness and eternal life from God.

Family & Friends are used by God to comfort and challenge us while we live on this earth.

Thankful people we should be!

1Corinthians 10:31, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God,” (**Colossians 3:17**), “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Our God is an awesome God, He reigns from heaven above, with wisdom, power and love, our God is an awesome God!

And it is for that very reason that you should (**1Thessalonians 5:16-18**), “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Pastor Mike Hale