

IN EVERYTHING... GIVE THANKS...!!!

1Thessalonians 5:18

then we will be “ringing” in the New Year. Time seems to be going faster and faster.

Here we are again, preparing for the holiday season. In a few days it will be Thanksgiving and then before you know it, Christmas will be here and

I would like to slow down a little and just reflect on the first “holiday” that we will be celebrating which is Thanksgiving. We have sometimes lost sight of what this day truly was set aside for. We must remember that this is a “holiday” that is only celebrated in our country, the United States of America. There are some other countries, such as Canada, that have added “Thanksgiving” to their country’s calendar, however, they are not on the same day.

In the United States, Thanksgiving is thought to have started in 1621. The Plymouth colonists from England and the Native American Wampanoag people shared an autumn harvest feast. This is acknowledged as one of the first “Thanksgiving” celebrations in the colonies.

For more than two centuries, days of thanksgiving were celebrated by individual colonies and states. It wasn’t until 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, that President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving Day to be held each November.

I do not want to get into all the “political” rhetoric that has come forth these days about this particular “holiday.” What I would like to simply discuss is what the Bible tells us about what the term “thanksgiving” is really all about and what it is according to the scriptures.

Let’s look at a time when Jesus made it perfectly clear that praise and thanksgiving are the evidences of true and living faith in our God. In Luke 17:11-19, we read that as Jesus was heading to Jerusalem, He went through the regions of Galilee and Samaria. There, He came across 10 lepers who cried out to Him to show mercy to them. Jesus told them to “*go to the priests,*” in which they did.

You see, in the Jewish rituals, this would be the first step in the “proving” that the restoration process had begun. However, Jesus showed them that they didn’t need to go through a “process.” They simply needed to be healed by Him. On the way to the priests, they realized that they were healed.

Only one, however, seeing that he was healed, stopped and turned back to the One who healed him. He went back to Jesus and cried out giving glory to God for his total healing. This man came to Jesus and fell down at His feet and gave “thanks” to Jesus and his God, for setting him free from his illness.

The interesting thing that we see in this account was that this man was a Samaritan. Samaritans were considered by the Jewish people to be the lowest of the lows. They were considered “half-breeds” and were thought to be even lower, on their scale of humanity and worth, than the dreaded, heathen Romans. Yet, this man was healed. AND...he was the only one out of the ten that went back to Jesus and thanked Him and praised God for healing him.

We see this man was healed, as were the rest of that group of people who had leprosy. However, when he realized he was healed, he came back to glorify and give thanks unto Jesus and the Lord God. We see that because this man’s heart recognized where his healing came from and was so full of gratitude and thankfulness to God for his healing, that Jesus tells him to go his way for he was also made “**whole**.”

It is very important that we realize that out of the ten only one came back and gave thanks. Jesus declares very pointedly, “*Were there not ten who were cleansed? where are the nine?*” This indicates that the Lord our God is looking at and for what is truly in a person’s heart.

You see, what this scripture and many others concerning thankfulness and the giving of thanksgiving shows us, is that our response to what God has done is **more important** than what was done. We see that Jesus, Himself, declares, “*Weren’t there ten that were cleansed? Where are the nine?*”

God is looking for that response, and He notices it when it is not there. We miss out on the fullness of what God wants to do when we do not thank our God for all that He has done. God wants to do even more...but... will we simply thank Him for what He has already done. Having a heart for the love of God and giving true thankfulness unto our God, reflects what is truly within that person’s heart towards God. God delights in that and will give us even more. Wow!!!

This man recognized that it was truly God who did this wonderful thing. Yes, he was concerned about getting healed. However, once he realized he was healed, he immediately knew that it was Jesus who did this wonderful thing. He turned and gave thanksgiving unto the Lord. The end result was even greater than being healed of this leprosy. This man was “made whole.” True salvation would soon be his after Jesus rose from the grave.

This man’s life was totally turned around. He was a leper. Now he was healed. He was on his way to hell. Now, salvation, heaven and eternal life was at the door of His heart. You see, Jesus made it clear that praise and thanksgiving are evidence of genuine faith. Thankfulness and faith go hand in hand.

We must realize that the sacrifice of thanksgiving is a natural outflow of the true believer’s life. It springs forth from a right relationship with the living God through Jesus Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit. However, why is it called a “sacrifice.” It would seem as if giving thanks to our God would be a blessing and a joy. So why is it called a “sacrifice.”

The term “sacrifice” literally means to offer to a deity something that is very precious. It is usually thought of by offering an animal or a possession. We must grasp the fact, however, that the term “sacrifice” means to literally destroy and/or to totally give whatever you may be offering to that deity. The term “sacrifice” literally implies that it costs the person who is giving that sacrifice. It should really be their own life. However, God loved His creation and allowed them to offer a substitute for the time being.

This is commonly known to most believers. The sacrifices of thanksgiving and most of the major sacrifices were usually animal sacrifices that were killed and then offered onto God. They literally represented the person giving and offering that sacrifice. Instead of that person being literally killed to thank their God, they would offer an animal or something else that was of value. We must truly understand the fact that the wages of our sin **IS** death – our own life.

You may think that this is not important now to the child of God. After all, Jesus was the final sacrifice for us all. That is very point. He took our place; He died instead of all of us dying because of our sin. He took the punishment in place of each of us.

Jesus took our place and went to hell because we were and to some extent are still sinners. But... because of Jesus, the old me is dead and now we are made new creatures in Christ. God now looks at us as “new creatures,” His children!!!

That is why we are to give thanks onto our God, continually. We thank Him for all that He has done. We thank Him for all that He will continue to do for those who are called His children. We thank Him most of all because He has saved us from an eternity in the Lake of Fire.

If we read 1Thessalonians 5:16-18, we can see that it implores the true believer to rejoice no matter what takes place **AND** also **to give thanks for all things**. This includes what we may look upon as what is good and also the not so good. It tells us in those scriptures that we, as true believers must, *“Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing. **In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.**”*

In Psalm 107:1, it simply implores the true believer, *“O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endures for ever.”* Why are we to thank the Lord, our God? It is because God is so very, very good!!! His mercy and His love never fails us. God’s love, His grace, His mercy and His peace are always there for us – forever!!!

We must recognize that God’s love, His grace, His mercy and His peace are the most important reasons to thank our God. Especially His mercy. Yes, it was His mercy that sent us His Son, Jesus. God’s mercy is a very important aspect of His unconditional love that He has for all His beloved creation. Yes, God’s grace is wonderful. Yes, God chose to look upon us and tell us how much He loves us.

However, it was His great gift of mercy that did something that would bring us back to Him and cause us to be in true relationship with Him. That “something” was and is His Son, Jesus. God’s mercy sent Jesus to die in our place and take our punishment in hell. But....three days later, Jesus rose from the dead and gave us the ability to receive everlasting life. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Father, God.

He did not stop there. Our gracious and merciful God also gave us His fullness, the Holy Spirit to dwell within every believer in Jesus to help us walk through this life. That is the reason why we truly give thanks onto our God.

When we give thanks onto our God, we are recognizing and we are declaring that we believe that very fact. We are saying it to our God – personally. It is a very personal declaration that comes from our heart and it goes straight to the heart of God.

We as children of God should be thankful and give God praise in all circumstances, in everything, and for everything. This type of thanksgiving is rooted in the **total belief** in God's love for us in all things. It reflects our constant faith in God and the total belief that *"...everything works together for good to those who love God"* (Romans 8:28).

In Hebrews 13:15-16, we see that the sacrifice of thanksgiving goes right along with the sacrifice of praise as it reads, *"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."*

We see that thanksgiving and praising God go hand in hand. You cannot truly praise God without having a heart full of thanksgiving. They both are parts of true worship along with the sacrifices of righteousness and joy. They all go along with each other. They are "sacrifices" because we give all our very lives unto the Lord. We die to self every day... but, we are always alive in Christ.

We can be so very thankful for the love that God has for all of us. He gave us Jesus, His only Son, to die on that cross for us. But... He rose again and because He lives, we now have **new life** in Him. That is why, not just on Thanksgiving Day, but every day we should simply, lovingly and very clearly declare, **"Thank you, my God!!! For you are good and your mercy endures forever."** In and for all things we will always give you our praise and thanksgiving!!!

*To you and your family, Trish and I would like to wish you all a very blessed Thanksgiving.
God bless you all.*