



Title: A Thanks Offering

Theme: What Do Christians have to be Thankful for?

“O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.” (1 Chronicles 29:16)

Our opening text today is something that every born-again Christian should take to heart. (Thru the Bible) Everything Christians have is given to them from God, it is freely given and therefore they should be bound in their hearts to use it for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Bishop Patrick said it well; “we ought to acknowledge God in all spiritual things, referring every good thought, good purpose, and good work to His grace, from who we receive it.” (Matthew Henry Commentary)

1 Chronicles 29:16, “O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.”

I would propose to you that Christians are the temple that God cares about today, for 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 17 says, “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.” The Lord has given Christians their Spiritual gifts, talents and all the resources they need to be a temple of worship that expresses to all who see their lives that they are children of God sold out to the cause of Christ and enjoying the abundant life promised by Him.

In this country the entire nation celebrates Thanksgiving in November. Some celebrate by busily preparing food, watching football and gathering with family. These are great Thanksgiving celebrations. However, Christians have a greater blessing in the opportunity to give thanks to God. Whether people in this world want to recognize it or not, everything they own is given to them by the Lord and there is going to be a day when all will give an accounting.

Just what do Christians have to be thankful for?

For His Saving Grace

There are four things that the Holy Spirit of God wants to give Christians not only revelation of but illumination that causes them to say yes this is true, this is why I am what I am. This is the reason for living today. The first is thing that Christians have to be thankful for is God's saving grace.

Ephesians 2:8-10 says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." This is one of the great evangelistic summaries in the Word of God. F.F. Bruce so wonderfully points out, "This is the watchword for the reformation theology: 'By grace alone, through faith alone, to God be the glory.'" The Bible teaches that everything Christians have comes by grace. "Grace" (*charis*) here affects man's sinfulness. It not only brings forgiveness to repentant sinners, but also joy from the Holy Spirit and heartfelt thankfulness to the Lord Jesus. This grace changes repentant sinners into new creations without destroying their individuality. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary)

Man cannot earn God's approval. This grace comes as a free gift through the sacrificial price Jesus paid on the Cross of Calvary. If this salvation could be earned by living out the law of God, by giving one's time and money and life to the work of God, it would no longer be grace. Romans 11:6 says, "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace." This grace is a gift to a people who did not deserve the giving. The Lord gives this grace only because it is His character, it is who He is.

Trying to fully explain this grace is like trying to pick up a horse and hold him in your lap. However, the Word of God is filled with Biblical accounts that give a picture of the Lord's grace. One beautiful picture is found in 2 Samuel. It is the story of King David extending loving kindness to the crippled son of Jonathan, allowing him to eat at his table just like one of his sons, and making sure his needs are provided for. (2 Samuel 9:9-11)

As we look at this truth I want us take time to look at it in spiritual allegory perspective as well. In Galatians 4:24 the Apostle Paul saw an allegory between Hagar and Sarah representing two covenants. Much of Jesus' teachings were done in allegories, parallels between the temporal and spiritual, the earthly and the heavenly. One may exhibit features which serve to illustrate the other. However, one must try to take caution in spiritual analogies and not let one's imagination take away from spiritual truths. In this light we may regard King David's conduct toward Jonathan's crippled son as an illustration of the King of Zion toward those who have been crippled by sin's debilitating power. (Swindoll; The Pulpit Commentary; Thru the Bible)

This beautiful picture of God's grace being lived out in the life of King David is found in 2 Samuel 9. Years before the event in 2 Samuel, David made a pledge to Saul's son. Jonathan asked this of David. "...show me unfailing kindness like that of the LORD as long as I live... and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family—not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth.' So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, 'May the LORD call David's enemies to account. And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.'" (1 Samuel 20:14-17) (Swindoll; The Pulpit Commentary; Thru the Bible)

Somewhat like David making a pledge to Jonathan, an oath made out of love, God "so loved the world" (John 3:16) the redemptive work of Triune God was decided long before we were born. The Bible says that Jesus was chosen before the creation of the world to come and redeem us. (1 Peter 1:20; Ephesians 3:11; Acts 2:23) The incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ were not the result of a change of purpose to meet unforeseen circumstances; they were foreseen and Christ was foreordained in the eternal counsels of the God-head. God had determined that those who would accept Jesus as personal Savior and Lord would be forgiven before the foundations of the world were laid. (The Expositors Bible Commentary; Matthew Henry Commentary; Barnes Notes; The Pulpit Commentary) Ephesians 1:4-8 says, "For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."

Just as David wanted to fulfill his pledge toward Jonathan, out of love, God has spread grace upon Christians because of the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. They are chosen in Christ because of His connection with His redeeming shed blood and the offices He holds, Savior and Mediator. (The Pulpit Commentary)

This Biblical account of David and Mephibosheth {me-fib'o-sheth} is found in 2 Samuel 9:1-12. It begins with David asking this question, "...Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

There is a spiritual allegory in this portion of Scripture in which David is a type of Christ showing grace to a family line that turned from God's perfect will for them, thus bringing the results of sin upon a family and nation. (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia; Matthew Henry) The Philistines had gotten victory over King Saul and Jonathan just as sin gets victory over the unrepentant, bringing danger not only to those who commit the sin but to all who are in the path of its destruction. Calamity came to the house of Saul because of sin. Saul could recognize and speak truth but Saul could not wear the belt of truth, just as there are many in and outside the church today who can recognize and speak truth but not wear it.

In this true Biblical account, there is a five year old child, Mephibosheth {me-fib'o-sheth}, who is dropped by his nurse who fears for the child's life because the Philistine might be in hot pursuit of Saul's family line. She fled from possible danger, but fled in haste not in God's speed. When the result of sin begins its work, it causes the sinner to flee in haste and make hasty choices thus crippling the effective of their lives.

The Bible says Mephibosheth's {me-fib'o-sheth's}, nurse, "...picked him up and fled, but as she hurried to leave, he fell and became crippled." (2 Samuel 4:4) Sin has it crippling effect on the soul of mankind, thus making the heart unable to perform to its full potential. It was once said, "Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay." There is nothing more life destroying than sin and it will bring shame into your and your families' lives.

The meaning of the name Mephibosheth {me-fib'o-sheth}, is sometimes debated. Regardless of the debate it births forth the element "bosheth" meaning shame or in its original use "baal." In 1 Chronicles 8:34 and 9:40, Mephibosheth {me-fib'o-sheth} is called Merib-Baal. It is worthy to note that in the Septuagint, in 1 Kings 18:19, 25 reads "prophets of shame" for what is a familiar term, "prophets of Baal." On this reckoning the name Mephibosheth {me-fib'o-sheth} would yield something like, "from the mouth of shame." (Who's Who in the Bible; The Expositors Bible Commentary; The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)

Mephibosheth {me-fib'o-sheth} was an heir to the throne of Saul, yet he considered himself as a servant to David. (2 Samuel 9:6) The tragedy of the sins committed by Saul had its negative effect on Mephibosheth just as the sin of Adam has its negative effect on all of mankind.

All who wish to enjoy the grace of salvation must first recognize that they are crippled by sin. Our feet are swift to lead us quickly into sin and astray from God's Word. Isaiah 53:6 says, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

The way of the soul and the way of the feet are often closely connected in Scripture. Psalm 56:13 says, "For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life." Psalms 73:2 and 116:8 tell of God's grace to those who are in Christ Jesus, "But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold." (Psalm 73:2) "For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling..." (Psalm 116:8)

Those who live on this earth were marked by sin that came down to them as a curse from the time of Adam. It was decided and agreed upon by God the Father, Christ His Son and the Holy Spirit that Jesus would come to earth and redeem sinful mankind from willful sin. Christians have been saved by grace and they are sustained only by the grace of God. The precious children of God feast from the manna of God's Word daily, just as Mephibosheth did at King David's table. And there will be that day when all who have Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord will be eating at that Greatest Thanksgiving feast, the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb of God." What a day that will be!

For My Home Being Prepared in Heaven

In this country the entire nation celebrates Thanksgiving in November. Some celebrate by busily preparing food, watching football and gathering with family. None of these are bad in themselves. However, Christians have a greater blessing in the opportunity to give thanks to God. Whether people in this world want to recognize it or not, everything they own is given to them by the Lord and there is going to be a day when all will give an accounting.

C.S. Lewis said, "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next." John Newton wrote, "When I get to heaven, I shall see three wonders there: The first wonder will be to see many people there whom I did not expect to see; the second wonder will be to miss many people whom I did expect to see; the third and greatest of all will be to find myself there"

There are many things about heaven that Christians can thank the Lord about. While living on this earth they have to suffer the consequences of sin just as Job came to know the sufferings of this world. He lost children, possessions and knew bad health. Knowing that at the end of his life that something wonderful will take place, he says, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes... How my heart yearns within me! (Job 19:25-27)

Job, through his personal relationship with God, (The Expositors Bible Commentary) has an unwavering faith that he will see the Lord. He had revelation that there would some day be the resurrection of the believers.

The children of God may very well be afflicted with disease, or loss of property. They may be forsaken by their friends as Job was. However, there is going to be a day when their body will be resurrected and they will have a physical body that is healthy, not subjected to sickness, pain or death or overcome by sin. (Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon: Barnes notes; Thru the Bible; Matthew Henry Commentary; The Pulpit Commentary; 1 Corinthians 15:44)

Christians can praise God for in heaven there is going to be a perfect city where there is no crime, no homeless, no unemployment, no pollution, no corruption in city councils or government. Heaven is victorious with no civil unrest, no terrorism and no more wars. There will be fairness, truth and goodness, and God's holiness will reign. Everyone will be upright and honest.

Charles E. Fuller once announced that he would be speaking the following Sunday on "Heaven." During that week, a beautiful letter was received from an old man who was very ill. I ask that you find the peace that is in this man's heart as I read a portion of His letter.

"Next Sunday you are to talk about Heaven. I am interested in that land, because I have held a clear title to a bit of property there for over fifty-five years. I did not buy it. It was given to me without money and without price. But the donor purchased it for me at tremendous sacrifice. I am not holding it for speculation since the title is not transferable. It is not a vacant lot. For more than half a century I have been sending materials out of which the greatest architect and builder of the universe has been building a home for me which will never need to be remodeled or repaired because it will suit me perfectly, individually, and will never grow old. Termites can never undermine its foundations for they rest on the rock of ages. Fire cannot destroy it. Floods cannot wash it away. No locks or bolts will ever be placed upon its doors, for no vicious person can ever enter that land where my dwelling stands. It is now almost completed and ready for me to enter in and abide in peace eternally, without fear of ever being rejected. I hope to hear your sermon on heaven next Sunday from my home in Los Angeles, but I have no assurance that I shall be able to do so. My ticket to heaven has no date marked for the journey -- no return coupon -- and no permit for baggage. Yes, I am all ready to go and I may not be here while you are talking next Sunday, but I shall meet you there some day." (Ency of 7700 Illust. P. 545, #2183)

For His Plans to Biblically Prosper Me

Christians do not have a guarantee that they will be around tomorrow, but they do have the sure promise of heaven and they can praise God because He has a plan to prosper them for His glory. The Lord has an ultimate purpose for His people.

God says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:11-13)

At the writing of this verse, the prophet Jeremiah heard that some of the false prophets who were taken into captivity for seventy years in Babylon, were predicting an early fall of Babylon and an early restoration of the exiles back to Judah. Jeremiah's letter warned the exiles against the deceptions of these false preachers and urged them to wait patiently upon the Lord.

All Christians will at times face conflicts, long periods between victories or long waits before seeing the Lord's promises fulfilled. Yet there is a sure hope that God has plans to prosper them in His work. He knows their Spiritual gifts. He knows their talents, resources, and ordained purposes. He will get done through them all that He desires. All He requires from them is ears longing to hear, hearts eager to obey and faith to wait upon Him and His timing.

For His Working In Me

Christians can find peace and rest in God's plan for them and they praise God because He is working in them. Christians can praise, trust and obey the Lord, knowing that He is their enabler. To enable someone is to give means, authority or power to do what you have directed them to accomplish. He not only supplies us with all that we need according to His sufficient grace, but He effects the changes in and through us for His greatest pleasure.

The greatest news of redemption for Christians personally is that they do not need stay the same. The Lord just receives them as they are. He takes the repentant and changes their heart. All they need to do is invite Him in and say, "Lord make my heart and life into moldable clay. Make something useful out of me for your glory, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ." He supernaturally takes that hard heart of stone that is unable to give attention to the Lord and He gives back a heart of flesh that longs to hear from God and also pleases Jesus Christ. (Ezekiel 36:26,27; The Expositors Commentary)

The apostle Paul describes the Christian's enablement for carrying out the Lord's exhortation in Philippians 2:13, "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose." (Philippians 2:13)

When Christians desire to expose themselves to the things of God through prayerfully reading the Bible, listening to Christian music and having Christian fellowship, then it is God who has put that desire in them. He will enable them to get all His will done as they surrender to the Holy Spirit's control. If Christians have a desire to witness for the Lord in the work place or the home, or express the love of Christ to others, then it is God who has put that desire in them. As they surrender to His will they will find the strength, the wisdom and the joy that comes in a walk of obedience. They praise Him because He calls the plays of life and He is never wrong.

James Dunn shared the true story of Roger Staubach, who was the quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys in 1971 when they became Super Bowl Champions. Roger shared how difficult it was for him to let coach Landry call every play. Coach Landry told Roger when to run, hand off the ball or pass it.

Roger knew coach Landry had a brilliant mind when it came to football strategy yet pride said that he should be able to call the plays. Roger later wrote, "I faced up to the issue of obedience. Once I learned the joy of obedience there was harmony, fulfillment and victory."

There are many Christians who have learned the value of listening to the Head Coach, Jesus Christ, and are getting victory over selfish living and arrogance. They know of God's transforming power. There are Christians who have simply surrendered to the Holy Spirit's promptings and they are getting victory over worry, fear, bitterness, depression and low self-esteem, thus blossoming in the power of God and living a changed life.

Christians have a God who, before the creation of the World, chose to redeem wicked mankind through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. It is by His grace they are saved and not by any merit of works of their own. They have an eternal home awaiting them. They have a Lord that has a wonderful plan for them and they have the Lord living in them through the Spirit of Christ. He is working in them to accomplish His will. May Christians live lives that express a thankful heart. May they be the temples of praise that God desires them to be, He has provided all they need and they belong to Him.

Let us pray!

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