



**Title: How to Say Thanks**

**Theme: Expressing Thankfulness to the Body of Christ**

**Series: Full Measure of Thanksgiving**

**Introduction:** *Appreciation raises value.* William James said, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated." The Apostle Paul was led of the Holy Spirit of Christ to express thankfulness and he was a master at it. He expressed appreciation to God and to others as well. Paul wrote most of the New Testament and it is normal to read phrases like, "I always thank God for you..." (1 Corinthians 1:4) "Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..." (2 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 1:3) "I thank God every time I remember you..." (Philippians 1:3) "We always thank God..." (Colossians 1:3) "We always thank God for all of you..." (1 Thessalonians) "We ought to always thank God for you..." (2 Thessalonians 1:3) "I thank Jesus our Lord..." (1 Timothy 1:12) "I thank God..." (2 Timothy 1:3) and lastly, "I always thank God for you as I remember you in my prayers..." (Philemon 1:4)

God wants His elect to be appreciative as in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 which says, "...encourage one another and build each other up..." The Apostle Paul gives this exhortation, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." (Ephesians 4:29) Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, Paul gives us short exhortations that direct the motion of our hearts and lives and give us duties of great importance, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Through the Lord's faithful servant, Paul, an Apostle who exemplified a life of gratitude to God, Christ, and submission to the Holy Spirit we have our key text.

Listen as I read Colossians 2:7, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."

*I would propose to you the Word of God teaches clearly how we can say thanks to God, Christ and be enabled by the Holy Spirit to express gratitude to the blood purchased Body of Christ.*

*To whom are we to be thankful and how can we say thanks through Christ-centered humility?*

## **Thankfulness must be first given to God**

*The key to having speech which matches up with a life that expresses thanks is an understanding that thankfulness must be first given to God. Psalm 9:1-2*

says, “ I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.” (Psalm 9:1-2) David, the writer of this Psalm excites and engages himself to praise God for His mercies and the great things He had done for him and the government he oversaw with the Lord. If these expressions are found in David, a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22) then they will be found in the Holy Spirit Illuminated child of God.

The whole of Scripture teaches us, God expects suitable returns of praise from those for whom He has done marvelous works. (Luke 17:11-17) If we choose to give praise to God acceptably, then we must praise Him in sincerity, not only with lips, but from a life directed from a heart of praise. Holy joy is the life of thankful praise, as thankful praise is the language of Holy joy. Whatever occurs to make us glad, our joy must go past the circumstance or object, and be in Him who gave it.

We are joyful not because of good health, but because the Great Physician has given it to us. We are not joyful because of our nice homes, but because the Lord who provides has given us our homes, cars, jobs, ability to make money, and our success. If we are being afflicted in any way, we are not joyful because of the affliction, but through the affliction we are given the opportunity to express trust and enabled to live a life of praise to Him, no matter what may come our way.

Christians are to thank God first and foremost because of His Holy Spirit’s empowerment which daily affects the spiritual heart of born again Christians, causing them to no longer desire fleshly control, worldly drawings and devilish lies. Our God’s sovereignty not only offers heavenly promises but also intervenes for us in the earthly realm, thus, He deserves praise first and utmost.

When God has shown Himself to be above the enemies of the church we must take occasion to give glory to Him. I purposely reread Psalm 9:2, “I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing praise to your Name, O Most High!” This heart of thankfulness opens the door of mercy, enables us to enjoy God’s goodness and prepares our spiritual hearts to be aware of all the blessings God has given us.

The truth of praising God first, even in afflictions was so clearly seen in Pastor Martin Rinkart, who oversaw a church for the Lord in Eilenburg Germany.

“In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Germany was in the midst of wars, famine and pestilence. During an especially oppressed period, Pastor Rinkart conducted up to 50 funerals a day as a plague swept through town and as the Thirty Year’s War wreaked its own terror. Among those whom Pastor Rinkart buried were members of his own family.

Yet during those years of darkness and despair, when death and destruction greeted each new day, Pastor Rinkart wrote 66 sacred

songs and hymns. Among them was the song, 'Now Thank We All, Our God.'

Pastor Rinkart wrote, 'With hearts and hands and voice, Who wondrous things hath done. In whom His world rejoices; Who, from our mothers' arms Hath blessed us on our way with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.'

JDB, wrote in Our Daily Bread on October 12, 1998, "Rinkart demonstrates a valuable lesson for us all: Thankfulness does not have to wait for prosperity and peace. It's always a good time to praise God for wondrous things He has done." (Galaxie Software. (2002) 10,000 Sermon Illustration, Biblical Studies Press.)

As I study the whole counsel of God's Word, I am convinced the spiritual heart that is pleasing to God is somewhat like the elderly lady who had been ushered into the private office of President Lincoln. President Lincoln asked "What can I do for you?" The elderly lady placed a covered basket on the table and said,

'Mr. President, I have come here today not to ask any favor for myself or for anyone. I heard that you were fond of cookies, and I came here to bring you this basket of cookies!'

Tears trickled down the gaunt face of the great President. He stood speechless for a moment; then he said, 'My good woman, your thoughtful and unselfish deed greatly moves me. Thousands have come into this office since I became President, but you are the first one to come asking no favor for yourself or somebody else!'" (Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations; TX: Bible Communications)

The child of God who knows how to say thanks has the heart of David which is reflected in Psalm 57:7-11, "My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make music. Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples. For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth." (New Nave's Topical Bible)

## **Thanks for Christ**

*Once the child of God grasps the joy of just praising God because of who He is, he then says thanks for Christ.* 2 Corinthians 9:15, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift." This passage of Scripture is the closing statement to Paul's teaching on "Sowing Generously." Paul teaches about the need for using our gifts to help meet needs. He writes about how these generous gifts will result in "overflowing expressions of thanks to God." (2 Corinthians 9:11) In 2 Corinthians 9:15, Paul points to the Person who makes the way for us to enjoy the grace gifts that

enable us to minister to the needs of others. 2 Corinthians 9:15 tells us to thank God for Jesus Christ. (A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testament; Matthew Henry's Commentary; Barrett, The Second Epistle to the Corinthians; The Expositors Bible Commentary; Barnes Notes; The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible)

The reference is rather to the inexpressible gift which God had granted to them in bestowing His Son to die for them; and this is one of the most striking instances which occurs in the New Testament, showing that the mind of Paul was full of this subject and that wherever he began in his teachings, [Paul's aim was to point people to Christ] our Redeemer. (Barnes Notes)

The Greek word "indescribable" (*anekdiegetos*) is only used here in the New Testament and it means that words cannot fully explain the greatness of Christ, His giving His own life sacrificially for us on the Cross. No words can describe the greatness of this cost as seen from God's perspective. (Barnes Notes; The Complete Word Study Dictionary; Analytical Lexicon of the Greek; Word Meanings in the New Testament; Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Greek New Testament; Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon)

The Apostle Paul writes, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully..." (1 Corinthians 13:12) Our imperfect knowledge will some day be replaced with true perception which is totally clear and distinct. (New Bible Commentary; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; Barnes Notes; The Expositors Bible Commentary) Paul is teaching in this life we see the reflections of God as the Holy Spirit of Christ which give us revelation of God's Word. Yet being finite we still cannot fully grasp the infinite. When we see Christ face to face, we will then fully know. (Barclay, Lecturer in the University of Glasgow)

Even though we do not fully know, we are to give thanks to God for Christ because of the revelation we do have. 2 Corinthians 8:9 reveals to us, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich." Jesus Christ became poor by leaving glory and uninterrupted worship to God His father so you and I can be made rich in His love. We enjoy fellowship with God the Father and Christ His Son, and walk under the direction of the Holy Spirit of Christ. Thus, we are enabled to live the abundant life promised in Christ Jesus.

Romans 12:1-2 gives us clear instructions on a practical way to say thanks to our Lord for the sacrifice He made for us. "...in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Saying thanks in this way comes with a promise of His revelation to us, "Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing, and perfect will."

## **Same heart as the Apostle Paul**

*Knowing how to live a life of thanks to Christ enables you to be Holy Spirit illuminated with the same heart as the Apostle Paul.* He knew how to say thanks to God and to those who were in partnership with him in the Lord's work. Philippians 1:3-11 says, "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God.

The Apostle Paul presents to us the heartbeat of a mature Christian. These passages of Scripture present concisely and clearly the expressions of thanksgiving that are so desperately needed in the Body of Christ. Therefore we need to be concise in presenting the truths found in these Scriptures.

The Apostle Paul at Philippi is maltreated; there he is scourged and put in the stocks. At the time he writes of this portion of the letter he has seen little fruit from his labors, and yet he remembers Philippi with joy. He looks upon his sufferings for Christ as his credit and his comfort, and he so thankful. The Apostle is not alone in the world, he is not the only one living for Christ. He is part of a great family of believers. (Matthew Henry Commentary)

He is not in the presence of the Body of Christ, yet in his Roman prison he has great joy in remembering that there are others who are serving the Lord and living in a sweet fellowship with God and Christ. (The Preachers Outline & Sermon Bible)

Those involved in the work of the Lord are not alone. There is the whole Body of Christ with different spiritual gifts and committed to their work for the Lord. Those who are illuminated with this truth are just like the Apostle who wrote, "...giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light." (Colossians 1:12) Whether you are with a certain group of Christians or you are just remembering the labors and faithfulness of others, there can be a wonderful joy that floods your heart as you thank God for calling you into Kingdom service.

Another expression of thanksgiving is prayer. Jesus set the heartbeat, "My prayer is not for them alone, I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message." (John 17: 20) What a dynamic truth, to pray in the Name of Christ for all the churches and missionaries who partner with us in the Lord's work. To sacrifice time and strength to truly intercede for the Body of Christ.

What can we pray for? Colossians 1:9-12 tells how we can pray in step with the Holy Spirit of Christ, “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.”

We can say thanks by praying and we can express thanksgiving by showing forth Biblical joy. Remember the Apostle Paul was in prison, therefore, his joy was not the joy of this world, based on temporary pleasures. The world’s joy sooner or later proves incomplete, leaving people unfulfilled. There remains that knowledge, that haunting awareness, that something can go wrong. Circumstances can change and situations like sickness, death, financial loss, and war rob people of assurance and satisfaction.

We can express thanksgiving by allowing Divine joy, a joy based on Christ, to be placed within us by the Holy Spirit of Christ, (John 15:11; Acts 13:52; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:2) This joy (*chars*) springs from faith, (Romans 15:13; Philippians 1:25) overrides all matters of life and death. This joy enables believers to rest in future rewards and keeps active soldiers of Christ keeping on. (Matthew 25:21-23)

We say thanks to God by partaking in the abundant resources available to us. They include having fellowship with God and His Son and (1 John 1:3-4) trusting that Jesus’ victory over death and hell, (John 14:28; 16:20-22) a heart of true repentance (Luke 15:1-10) hope in God’s glory (1 Peter 4:13) and knowing God’s Word – the revelations, commandments, and promises bring Divine joy. (John 15:11)

Making time to be aware of the others’ obedience to the Word of God and the life of Christ brings joy. (3 John 1:4) Giving to the Lord’s work brings joy. (2 Corinthians 8:2)

The Book of Romans gives a truth worth grasping, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.” (Romans 14:17)

We can say thanks by allowing the Lord to bring us into true Biblical fellowship. Acts 2:4 says, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teachings and to fellowship...” True Christian “fellowship,” (*koingnia*) is brought forth by the Holy Spirit and means a whole lot more than association with secular groups such as civic clubs and community bodies. There is a vast difference between

community participation with people calling themselves Christians and true spiritual participation. (The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible)

Christians not only devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, but united in the work of spreading the gospel. Christians in true service are united in feelings, interests, dangers, conflicts, opinions and the hope of blessedness that comes in serving Jesus Christ. They have a joined life in sharing blessings and gifts, bearing each others burdens, sharing in the conflicts that come and the victories that are won in fulfilling the Great Commission. They exercise their spiritual gifts for the good of one another and all of mankind. (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:1; Romans 12:15; Revelation 7:9)

This fellowship begins with God; (Job 22:21; John 17:3) thus birthing the heart of agreement with His Sovereignty; (Amos 3:2) a confidence in His love; (Romans 8:38-39) the enjoyment of His presence within us; (Romans 8:11) a conformity to His image; (1 Corinthians 11:7; Colossians 3:10; 2 Corinthians 3:18) and participation in the happiness that comes from fellowship with God the Father, Jesus His Son and the Holy Spirit. (Harper's Bible Dictionary; Easton's Bible Dictionary)

Lehman Strauss writes, "...Today a very narrow conception of true fellowship prevails. [There is a thinking] if we attend the same church, recite the same creed, say the same prayers, eat at the same church [dinner], and socialize with the same crowd, we call this Christian fellowship. But is it? For years I have watched all these things going on among professing Christians where there was often little conception of true fellowship in the Gospel. Among Christians there may be difficulties and disappointments along the way, but never a disruption where there is prayer fellowship, [ongoing in spiritual warfare for key ministries]."

The Apostle Paul longed for this fellowship with the Christians in Rome. He writes, "...that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith." (Romans 1:12)

True Christian fellowship enables us to say thanks through partnership. It did not matter whether Paul was under arrest or free. Paul's friends shared with him in his time of great need, but more importantly they were concerned with the spread of the gospel. Enjoying God's grace means having the benefits of being saved and being adopted into the family of God through Christ, but it also means suffering for the sake of the gospel at times. (The Bible Knowledge Commentary; A Commentary Critical and Explanatory; The New American Commentary; The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible)

Christians say thanks by sympathizing with those who are suffering persecution from those in the world, bearing affliction from Satan or having to persevere in their callings in the Lord's work. Christians say thanks by sending hope and encouragement to those who are proving faithful in what God is asking them to

do.

The Apostle Paul in his closing exhortations writes, “Keep on loving each other as brothers... Remember those... who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.” (Hebrews 13:1-3) How do we Biblically show our thanks to the persecuted, those hated by the world and those who need to persevere in their work with the Lord?

Provide for practical needs when you can, point them constantly to the Word of God, remind them of the unshakable love of Christ and the promise of their Father who is in heaven. The Bible says this of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:15-16) And in Hebrews 2:17-18, “For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.”

### **Bearing with one another**

*How do we say thanks? By thanking God for the Body of Christ, remaining constant in prayer, receiving and expressing God's joy, sharing Biblical fellowship, being a true partner in ministry and by bearing with one another.* Colossians 3:12-13 says, “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

The most miserable people are those who are involved with a church and have convinced themselves it is their calling to be critical and fault finding. The sad news is that they make everyone else miserable in their self appointed position.

Let the Holy Spirit place this truth deep in our hearts. Christians are God’s chosen people and He did not choose them because of what they have done. Rather they were chosen on the account of Christ’s sacrifice. Those who express thankfulness are those who regularly allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse their hearts. They leave the sanctification of Christians in God’s hands.

This is why we are to make every effort to put ourselves in a ministry position, where we can first have compassion for their spiritual condition, in kindness and humility point them in the right direction because if not for the grace of God we would still be blind to God’s will in any certain truths. In gentleness and patience give Biblical instructions.

Offenses are sure to come. You and I are surely going to be overcome by the flesh, the world's view and even the lies of the devil. God's way of dealing with offenses is simple and yet sobering, "Forgive as the Lord forgave you!" (Colossians 3:13) Colossians helps us keep the proper perspective about ourselves.

A young lady, Mary was going to college, her major was English and she wrote home:

"Dear Mom and dad, I am sorry to be so long in writing, but all my paper was lost the night the dormitory burned down. I am out of the hospital now, and the doctor says my eyesight should be back to normal sooner or later. The wonderful boy, Bill, who rescued me from the fire, kindly offered to share his little apartment with me until the dorm is rebuilt.

He comes from a good family, so you won't be surprised when I tell you we are going to get married. In fact you always wanted a grandchild, so you will be glad to know you will be grandparents early next year.

Then she added to her letter – Please disregard the above practice in English composition. There was no fire. I have not been in the hospital. I am not pregnant and I do not have a steady boy friend. But I did get a D in French and an F in Chemistry, and I wanted to be sure you received the news in proper perspective. Love Mary" (Free Illustrations, The Jesus site, on line Christian Resources)

Brothers and sisters in Christ, Mary's major was not French and Chemistry, her major was English. Because of our sinful nature, we spend more time focusing on the D's and F's in areas that God is still doing a work in Christian's lives, thus we fail to say "Thanks" for Spiritual gifts exercised sacrificially for our good. This is why we are told to bear with one another!

**In Closing:** *How do we say thanks? By being thankful for who God is, thanking God for Christ, thanking God for those who are in partnership with us and lastly, forgiving others as the Lord has forgiven us. We are called to get and keep the proper perspective! Be surrendered to God's will! Learn how to say "Thanks!"*

Let us pray!