

The Principle of Thanksgiving

"Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! 2 Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. 3 Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. 4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. 5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations." -- Psalms 100

1. The Principle of Thanksgiving ... 1-2

Taking a quick look about it might be easy to see the world as becoming ungrateful and in a bad mood all the time. Words like please and thank you seem to be heard less and less. However it is not just the world at large that has become thankless . . . how about you? Is thanksgiving a holiday thing or a principle thing in your life?

The psalmist speaks of the principles of thanksgiving. Principles are eternal and therefore they never change with the culture or circumstances we might happen to find ourselves in. Regardless the principle are to rule our voice and conduct before the Lord and others.

Joyfully Thankful ... *Make a joyful shout*

To make a joyful shout is more than hollering or screaming ... the emphasis is upon what we are to shouting about ... the psalmist is speaking of making an open air confession. In fact the Hebrew word means "an extension of the hand." It is as if the psalmist is saying to cup the hand to the mouth and speak out loud a very joyful confession to the Lord.

Serving Thankful ... *Serve the Lord with gladness*

When our lives are governed by a joyful heart that speaks words of thanksgiving to the Lord . . . naturally or better yet "supernaturally" our lives will fall in line to become servants filled with glad works.

Come Thankful ... *Come before His presence with singing*

As the called of God we are to come into His presence with our hearts filled with the joy and gladness of knowing Him. We are to come singing with joyful voices of praise and thanksgiving.

Ephesians 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

Think about this the next hymn we sing . . . listen to yourself sing. How would you measure it? Thankful or thankless?

If we live ego centered or self centered lives we will never become principled centered people who understands the realm of thanksgiving.

2. The Perception of Thanksgiving... 3

The psalmist moves from the principle to the perception of thanksgiving. He looks to the mind of the matter with the affirmation "to know" God. It speaks to the intimate level of the heart and soul and moves beyond a mental ascent of a knowledge of a higher power.

Today, many want only a God to fill their "emotions" to make them feel good, rather than a God who is involved in the intimate details of their lives.

Matthew 10:30 "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

How we perceive things to be is usually what motivates us. What is your perception of God? How we perceive God ... who He is and what He is doing will make or break our spirit of thanksgiving.

God's Authority ... *He is God*

The first perception we must see is God's authority. The psalmist states emphatically, "He is God!" Any questions?

1 Chronicles 17:20 O LORD, there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

Whose authority are you under today? Your own, someone else's, or God's? How you answer shows who God is in your life.

God's Authorship ... *He who made us*

From authority to authorship the psalmist uses the positive and negative . . . God is our Maker! We cannot make ourselves! There are no "self made" men, only those who refuse to recognize God as Creator.

Hebrews 12:2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Author of our lives places in us works and words of thanksgiving. Give thanks to your God!

God's Assurance ... *We are His people*

When we live recognizing God's authority and authorship in our lives we live in the assurance of knowing we are His people.

Thanksgiving tends to place itself in the realm of the material objects of our lives . . . food, clothes, houses, cars, etc. These things are temporary and could be lost in a moments time. We should be thankful for those things, but our thanksgiving must reach into the assurance of the things we cannot lose.

Eternal life . . . John 10:28
Forgiveness . . . 1 John 1:9
Access to God through Prayer . . . Hebrews 4:15-16
God's presence . . . Hebrews 13:5

What's your perception of God and are you doing what He asks you to do with a thankful heart?

3. The Progression of Thanksgiving ... 4

The psalmist shows us that the state of thanksgiving in our hearts and lives has a progression to it. Thanksgiving takes on a note of praise. The words of John Henry gave proof that our praising God is a privilege both public and private. The private or personal invades to enhance the public and the public praising creates a host for personal praise.

Public Praise ... *Enter into His gates*

Corporate worship is the time we enter into the gates ... the opening of praising God. What is your attitude in worship . . . get it over or I can't get over it? Are you thankful the service is over or are you thankful to be serving? Public praise worship is the real barometer of our personal worship of God. The heart and voice attitude is . . . "We praise You God!"

Personal Praise ... *And into His courts*

The gates made entry into the presence and the courts lend themselves to our private or personal times of praising God. Do you have those times? The personal worship impacts the public. The heart and voice attitude is . . . "I praise You God!"

Privileged Praise ... *Be thankful and bless His name*

If our hearts are geared to the public and private arenas of praise we will discover the privilege of praise.

Warren Wiersbe states, *"I have felt for a long time that one of the particular temptations of the maturing Christian is the danger of getting accustomed to his blessings. Like the world traveler who has been everywhere and seen everything, the maturing Christian is in danger of taking his blessings for granted and getting so accustomed to them that they fail to excite him as they once did."*

Emerson said if the stars came out only once a year, we would all want to stay up and see them. But because we see the stars all the time we don't take the time to look at them.

Why did only one cleansed leper return to praise and give thanks to Jesus?

One waited to see if the cure was real.
One waited to see if it would last.
One said he would see Jesus later.
One decided that he had never had leprosy.

One said he would have gotten well anyway.
One gave the glory to the priests.
One said, "O, well, Jesus didn't really do anything."
One said, "Any rabbi could have done it."
One said, "I was already much improved."

(George Mikes, "How to be Decadent")

Do they sound like us? Have we become accustomed to God's blessings? The progression of our thanksgiving will lead us to see it as a privilege in both public and personal praise.

4. The Person of Thanksgiving ... 5

God is Good ... *For the Lord is good*

God is good all the time! All the time God is good! God cannot help but be good! His loving acts toward mankind are always wrapped in His goodness and love. God is good!

God is Mercy ... *His mercy is everlasting*

Mercy always triumphs over judgment. (James 2:13) Christ is God's mercy to man! Think about that a moment. Let it sink in our hearts and lives and it will be geared our hearts to giving thanks to God for His everlasting mercy that is directed to us today and will be in the tomorrow and into eternity!

God is Truth ... *His truth endures to all generations*

God doesn't lie. What He tells us today will be true tomorrow and into all generations. It was true for the psalmist who penned these words and it is true to you and I who read these words. Now give Him thanks!