

# Moments *for* You

Volume 62, Number 4

Theme: Thanksgiving

O give thanks unto  
the  
**Lord**  
for He is good



## THANKFUL IN ALL THINGS

The next footsteps in the corridor, he knew, might be those of the guards taking him away to his execution. His only bed was the hard, cold stone floor of the dank, cramped prison cell. Not an hour passed when he was free from the constant irritation of the chains and iron shackles cutting into his wrists and legs.

Separated from friends, unjustly accused, brutally treated—if ever a person had a right to complain, it was this man, languishing almost forgotten in a harsh Roman prison. But instead of complaints, his lips rang with words of praise and thanksgiving!

The man was the Apostle Paul—a man who had learned the meaning of true thanksgiving, even in the midst of great adversity. Earlier, when he had been imprisoned in Rome, Paul wrote, “Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:19-20).

Think of it: always giving thanks for everything—no matter the circumstances! Thanksgiving for the Apostle Paul was not a once-a-year celebration, but a daily reality that changed his life and made him a joyful person in every situation.

Thanksgiving—the giving of thanks—to God for all His blessings should be one of the most distinctive marks of the believer in Jesus Christ. Nothing turns us into bitter, selfish, dissatisfied people more quickly than an ungrateful heart. And nothing will do more to restore contentment and the joy of our salvation than a true spirit of thankfulness.

From one end of the Bible to the other, we are commanded to be thankful. In fact, thankfulness is the natural outflowing of a heart that is attuned to God. The psalmist declared, “Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving” (Psalm 147:7). Why should we be thankful? Because God has blessed us, and we should be thankful for each blessing.

### THANK GOD FOR MATERIAL BLESSINGS

We seem never to be satisfied with what we have—rich or poor, healthy or sick. But what a difference it makes when we realize that everything we have has been given to us by God! Some years ago I visited a man who was wealthy and successful. He was the envy of all his friends and business associates. But as we talked, he broke down in tears, confessing that he was miserable inside. Wealth had not been able to fill the empty place in his heart.

A few hours later I visited another man only a short distance away. His cottage was humble, and he had almost nothing in the way of this world’s possessions. And yet his face was radiant as he told me about the work he was doing for Christ and how Christ had filled his life with meaning and purpose.

I am convinced that the second man was really the rich man. Although he didn’t have much, he had learned to be thankful for everything that God had given him. Are you constantly preoccupied with what you do not have? Or have you learned to thank God for what you do have?

### THANK GOD FOR THE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE

It is so easy to take people for granted, or even to complain and become angry because they do not

meet our every wish. But we need to give thanks for those around us—our spouse, our children, our relatives, our friends and others who help us in some way.

Do you let others know that you appreciate them and are thankful for them? The Christians in Corinth were far from perfect, but Paul began his first letter to them by telling them how he constantly thanked God for them (1 Corinthians 1:4). Thank God for those who touch your life.

#### **THANK GOD IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS**

We draw back from difficulties, yet not one of us is exempt from some kind of trouble. In many parts of the world it is dangerous even to be a Christian because of persecution.

And yet in the midst of those trials we can thank God, because we know that He has promised to be with us and that He will help us. We know that He can use times of suffering to draw us closer to Himself: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:2-3).

When the prophet Daniel learned that evil men were plotting against him to destroy him, “he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Daniel 6:10). I don’t know what trials you may be facing right now, but God does, and He loves you and is with you by His Holy Spirit. Cultivate a spirit of thankfulness even in the midst of trials and heartaches.

#### **THANK GOD ESPECIALLY FOR SALVATION**

God has given us the greatest Gift of all—His Son, who died on the cross and rose again so that we can know Him personally and spend eternity with Him in heaven: “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable [indescr-

ible] gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

The Bible tells us that we are separated from God because we have sinned. But God loves us—He loves you, He loves me—and He wants us to be part of His family forever. He loves us so much that He sent His only Son into the world to die as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. All we need to do is reach out in faith and accept Christ as our Savior and Lord: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Have you opened your heart to Jesus Christ? If not, turn to Him with a simple prayer of repentance and faith, and thank Him for what He has done for you. And if you do know Christ, how long has it been since you thanked God for your salvation? We should not let a day go by without thanking God for His mercy and His grace to us in Jesus Christ.

—Billy Graham, condensed

*So much has been given to me,  
I have no time to ponder over  
that which has been denied.*

—Helen Keller

## **CLEANSED AND THANKFUL**

A story is told of a man who was lost in the woods. Later, in describing the experience, he told how frightened he was and how he had even finally knelt and prayed. Someone asked, “Did God answer your prayer?” “Oh, no,” the man replied. “Before God had a chance, a guide came along and showed me the way out.”

#### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR THANKSGIVING**

Like that man, many people are blind to the blessings that God daily showers upon them. Whether you are a believer in Jesus Christ or a person

who does not even believe in God, the fact is, God has blessed you far more than you realize and far more than you deserve. It is important to understand how to respond properly to God's abundant blessings. To be oblivious to the fact that God is blessing you or, even worse, to take credit for His blessings as if you earned them by your own efforts, would be to slight God. The only proper response is to glorify Him from a thankful heart.

These two responses, the proper and improper, are illustrated for us in the account of Jesus cleansing the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19). Jesus is traveling somewhere along the border between Samaria and Galilee, where He enters a village and encounters ten leprosy men. According to the Law, they keep their distance but they recognize Jesus and cry out to Him for mercy. Rather than drawing near and touching them, as He did with the leper in Luke 5:13, Jesus simply instructs them to go and show themselves to the priests. There would be no point in such action unless they were cleansed of their leprosy, and yet at this point they were not cleansed. They had to act with obedient faith. As they were going, they were cleansed. But only one of the ten turns back to glorify God and give thanks to Jesus for His great mercy and power.

#### **LEPROUS HEARTS**

In the Bible, leprosy is a dreaded disease that is a picture of sin. The Bible wants all of us to see ourselves in our natural state as spiritual lepers in God's sight. Our hearts are deceitful and desperately sick (Jeremiah 17:9), sick with sin, unclean before the holy God.

The proud refusal to acknowledge our true condition as spiritual lepers

is one of the main reasons people do not receive God's salvation in Jesus Christ. We all are prone to say, "I may have my faults—after all, I'm only human—but I'm not a terrible sinner. I'm basically a good person." That's what the Pharisees said about themselves, and they missed God's Savior. Indeed, who needs a Savior, if you're basically a good person?

#### **CRY OUT TO GOD**

The lepers pleaded, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." By crying out for mercy, these men were acknowledging that they did not deserve healing. They weren't claiming, "We're lepers, but we're pretty good lepers. We think we're worthy of being healed." They knew that there was nothing in themselves to earn healing or to commend them above others. This is the only way that we can come to God for deliverance from the leprosy of sin: to acknowledge that we deserve God's wrath, but to appeal to His great mercy.

The good news is that God delights to show mercy to those who cry out for it! He is "rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:12-13). The cleansing of these lepers pictures what God does to the souls of those who call out to Him for salvation. He instantly cleanses us from all our sins. He clothes us with the perfect righteousness of Jesus. He restores and heals our souls.

#### **FAITH IS THE KEY**

The only condition to receive God's healing for our leprosy souls is that we take Him at His word, that whoever believes in His Son Jesus will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). Just as these lepers did not first try to clean up and make themselves presentable, so we are to come to

Jesus just as we are. Just as these lepers had a faith that obeyed Jesus' word, so we must exercise personal obedient faith in Him with regard to His promise to save us from our sins.

### GIVING THANKS

The thankful leper represents the full fruit of saving faith, namely, lips that give joyful thanks to His name. He "with a loud voice glorified God" (Luke 17:15). If before his voice had been hampered by leprosy, it was now freed up and he exercised it with full force! Others may have been embarrassed by his exuberance, but he didn't care! Jesus had healed him and he was going to make it known! This leper's glad praise should be that of every person whose heart has been healed by Jesus' mighty power.

Spurgeon points out that while ten men prayed, only one praised. There are far more people who will pray in a time of need than praise God when He meets that need. If the Lord has delivered our souls from judgment, we ought to let others know about it. I have to remind myself that "Praise the Lord" is not just a slogan or something nice to do; it is a command. If my life is not marked by frequent praise to God for His many blessings, I am not being obedient. Those who have experienced Jesus' cleansing power should glorify Him!

—Steven J. Cole, condensed

## THINK AND THANK

When a Christian finds himself in a difficult situation, he should immediately give thanks to the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit, to keep his heart from complaining and fretting. The devil moves in when a Christian starts to complain, but thanksgiving in the Spirit defeats the devil and glorifies the Lord.

The word *gratitude* comes from the same root word as *grace*. If we have experienced the grace of God, then we ought to be grateful for what God brings to us. *Thank* and *think* also come from the same root word. If we would *think* more, we would *thank* more.

—Warren W. Wiersbe

## GIVING THANKS

*"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:12-14).*

Paul's prayer is a model or pattern for all believers to follow. Like his prayers here and elsewhere, our prayers should include praise as well as petitions. To the Philippians Paul wrote, "Be [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6). In 1 Timothy 2:1 he urged that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all." Later he told the Colossians to "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2). Paul constantly gave thanks in his prayers (Acts 27:35; Romans 1:8; 1 Timothy 1:12).

Giving thanks is too often demoted to a secondary place in the prayers of Christ's people. We are quick to make our requests and slow to thank God for His answers. Because God so often answers our prayers, we come to expect it. We forget that it is only by His grace that we receive anything from Him.

The Bible repeatedly stresses the importance of giving thanks. "Of-

fer unto God thanksgiving” (Psalm 50:14). “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High” (Psalm 92:1). “Giving thanks always for all things” (Ephesians 5:20). “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God” (Colossians 3:17). “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15). Thanksgiving should permeate our speech, our songs, and our prayers.

Our Lord knew the importance of giving thanks. Before feeding the five thousand, Jesus “took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples” (John 6:11). Just before raising Lazarus from the dead, “Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me” (John 11:41).

David (2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 28:7), the Levites (1 Chronicles 16:4; Nehemiah 12:24), Asaph and his relatives (1 Chronicles 16:7), Daniel (Daniel 6:10), and the priests, Levites, and descendants of Asaph (Ezra 3:10-11) also gave thanks to God.

In addition to those positive examples, the Bible teaches that failing to give thanks characterizes the wicked. One indictment of unbelievers is that “when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful” (Romans 1:21). Evil men are marked by ungratefulness (Luke 6:35; 2 Timothy 3:2).

Paul gave thanks to God for his salvation and his opportunity to serve Him (1 Timothy 1:12-13). The apostle also gave thanks for the spiritual growth of others: “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren ... because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of ev-

ery one of you all toward each other aboundeth” (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

Even mundane things like food call for giving thanks (1 Timothy 4:3-4). First Thessalonians 5:18 sums it up: “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus.”

—Adapted from *Colossians & Philemon* by John MacArthur

## THANKS FOR THORNS

To give thanks in every situation is sometimes very difficult. When your body is wracked with pain, or you have just learned that you have a physical problem for which there is no cure, or you have lost your job, or a cherished relationship has been broken, it’s hard to feel grateful. But we can learn to thank God because He gives us strength when we feel weak.

That’s why Paul could say, “I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). And as believers, we can be grateful that through such experiences God is accomplishing what is best for us. Even through our suffering, He is working for our good (Romans 8:28).

Scottish author and preacher George Matheson (1842-1906), who was blind, expressed this prayer: “My God, I have never thanked You for my thorn. I have thanked You a thousand times for my roses, but not once for my thorn. I have been looking forward to a world where I shall get compensated for my cross, but I have never thought of my cross as itself a present glory. Teach me the value of my thorn.”

As we surrender ourselves to the Lord and remember that He is working in everything to accomplish our ultimate good, we can thank

Him even when we are pierced by “thorns.”

It’s easier to bear the burden of suffering when we carry it with gratitude.

—Richard DeHaan, *Our Daily Bread*

## ONE DAY OF DARKNESS

There is an imaginative story told of a day when the sun did not rise. Six o’clock came and there was no sign of dawn. At seven o’clock, there was still no ray of light. At noon, it was as black as midnight. Then came the long dark hours of the afternoon. Finally evening arrived but no one slept that night. Some wept, some wrung their hands in anguish. Every church was full of people praying earnestly to God. After that long night of terror and agony, millions of eager, tear-streaked faces were turned toward the east. When the sky began to grow red and the sun rose, there was a loud shout of joy. Millions of lips said, “Bless the Lord, O my soul,” because the sun had risen after one day of darkness.

The very consistency of God’s blessings sometimes seems to dull our gratitude. The wonderful thing about the mercies of God is that they are fresh every morning and new every evening. Let us remember to be constantly thankful to our gracious God.

## THANKS FOR FLEAS

Corrie ten Boom was an inspiration and challenge to thousands of people after World War II. Hearts were stirred and lives changed as she told with moving simplicity about God’s sufficiency to meet her needs, even as a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp.

Not only was the camp filthy, but there were fleas everywhere. Corrie’s sister Betsie, who was imprisoned with her, insisted that 1 Thessalo-

nians 5:18 was God’s will for them: “In every thing give thanks.” But giving thanks in a flea-infested place seemed unrealistic to Corrie—until she realized why the guards didn’t come into their barracks to make them stop praying and singing hymns. They wanted to avoid the fleas! So, the prisoners were free to worship and study the Bible. The fleas, yes, even the fleas were agents of grace, and something to be thankful for.

What are some of the “fleas” in our lives? They aren’t the big difficulties, but the petty annoyances. They are the little trials from which we can’t escape. Is it possible that they are one of the ways the Lord teaches us spiritual lessons and helps us to increase our endurance?

When we are tempted to grumble, let’s remember the fleas and give thanks. —V.C.G., *Our Daily Bread*

## GUARDED BY GRATITUDE

Imagine for a moment that your city is surrounded by enemy forces who aim to destroy you. And you are aware that enemy sympathizers live and work in the city with a view to undermining the city’s defenses. And suppose you discover that there is a song which the enemy and their sympathizers cannot tolerate or approach. Whenever they hear it, they pull back and run the other direction.

Isn’t it certain that you would want to learn this song? And after you learned it, you would sing it when you went to bed at night and when you got up in the morning. You would sing it on the way to work, and whenever you were among strangers. And as your confidence grew you would even venture outside the city and sing it as you walked boldly through the enemy lines on your way to another

town. The more deeply embedded in your mind the song became, the more steady and deep and serene and fearless your life would become. Others would see and hear and learn the song from you. And in the end you would conquer the enemy, and there would be no threat at all.

Well, we are surrounded by the enemy—namely, Satan and his forces. He is the father of lies (John 8:44). His weapons are deceit and delusion. His aim is the destruction of your faith and love. And there are enemy sympathizers inside the city of our own souls—namely, the desires of the old self. And there is a song that Satan and his sympathizers cannot tolerate or approach—namely, the song of thanks to God.

Thankfulness is an essential guardian of the soul, and therefore we should guard ourselves with gratitude. We are fair game for the devil when we don't abound with thanksgiving. Unless the song of thanksgiving is being sung in our hearts the enemy outside will deceive his way into the city of our soul, and the enemy sympathizers within will make his job easy. So for the sake of your own safety, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Receive the wealth of His grace in Jesus Christ. Fill your mouth with thanksgiving. And guard yourselves forever with gratitude! —John Piper, condensed

## ETERNAL THANKSGIVING

*“Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 7:12).*

For all eternity, thanksgiving will be due to our God. There will never be a time when thanksgiving to God becomes obsolete. There will never be a place when thanksgiving to

God will be inappropriate, or insignificant, or unwelcome, or un-called-for. There will never be a person in whose presence thanksgiving to God will be upstaging, or undiscerning, or offensive. Thanksgiving is due to our God forever and ever! The thanksgiving that is above and beyond all other thanksgivings is rightly and fully ascribed to Him!

Two lessons flow from this passage. First, whenever thanks is due to anyone, it is due even more to God. Let this be a reminder. James wrote: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father” (James 1:17). The Apostle Paul asked: “What hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). Answer: Nothing. John the Baptist added: “A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven” (John 3:27). Thanksgiving be to our God for ever and ever!

Second, the thanks we offer to God will continue for all eternity. So, cultivating a heart of thanksgiving here and now is one of the best ways to prepare for eternity. We're setting our hearts in line with heaven. We're fixing our vision on eternity in the presence of God, and of the Lamb. We're pressing ourselves in the direction of finding satisfying soul-relief, taking the most direct route toward that destination.

Let's become a people who so enter in to the fullness of our salvation that it actually shows itself among us in many thanksgivings to God (2 Corinthians 9:12). Who knows how many discouragements that will deliver us from—how many tears it will wipe away even on this side of heaven? And let's press on knowing that we're engaging in an eternal activity as we cultivate thankful hearts.

—Dr. L. Daryle Worley, adapted