

## ***Time for Thanksgiving*** **Hebrews 13:15-16**

Can you believe that it is almost time for Thanksgiving? This year Thanksgiving is on Thursday, November 23. That is just two weeks away from tomorrow!

But really the Bible teaches that we should *always* give thanks to God! 1 Thessalonians 5:18 states, "*in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*" So, we don't have to wait two more weeks to express our thanks to Him. We can thank Him today! But, you might point out all the tough things that are preventing you from expressing your appreciation to the Lord today.

Those Pilgrims inspire me! It is truly amazing that they even gave thanks that autumn in 1621. Their voyage was 3,000 miles under crowded conditions that took them 3 months through stormy seas. At one point the rudder broke and on another occasion the mast snapped into three pieces. Many developed scurvy, while others suffered from pneumonia. Their leader was a man named William Bradford and his wife fell overboard and drowned. The first winter they lost half of their original number (47) to the cold and to sickness. Yet, that after the harvest in the second year, they chose to thank the Lord for their blessings and even invited 90 native American Indians to join them in their feast of deer, turkey, corn cakes, carrots, onions, turnips, beets, cucumbers and cabbage.

Could you have given thanks? Would you have given thanks? Well, let me prime the pump of thanksgiving with some good words from Hebrews 13:15-16.

### **Opening of Thanksgiving, 13:15**

***15 Therefore by Him...***

It is tough sometimes to get started in expressing gratitude to God, so this text helps us out with a good reminder where the portal to thanksgiving is found. It is found in Christ! His perfect atonement for our salvation is where we find a reason and the resources to live a life of gratitude rather than a life of envy or bitterness or regret.

### **Opportunities for Thanksgiving, 13:15**

***...let us continually...***

I suppose it is easy to give thanks when the doctor gives you a good report on your checkup. Anyone can feel warm inside when they drive a new car or when they move into a new house. Promotions or raises at work are usually occasions for the giving of thanks to the Lord. When your team wins the World Series, most of us are so happy and thankful. There are lots of opportunities to give thanks to the Lord in life. But I find it challenging to let this verse sink into my daily thoughts and practice when it says, "*let us continually*". Hmmm. That means the gratitude to Him never ends! Wow! I am not sure that I am there yet.

### **Offering of Thanksgiving, 13:15**

*...offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks...*

Have you ever thought about gratitude to the Lord being like an offering or similar to a sacrifice? What is a sacrifice anyway? It is when we give something of value to us to someone. It will cost you something to humble yourself and express your thanks to the Lord. He gives here a couple of incentives to help us lift up that sacrifice to the Lord. First, he encourages us to give thanks as we focus on the character of God. That is what *praise to God* means. He doesn't have to give us something to earn this offering, He is just worthy of praise because of Who He is. Second, it says that thanksgiving is like the crop that is harvested via our conversation or our communication. Can anyone know of your thanksgiving to the Lord if you never say anything about it? Remember, it will cost you to say something about your gratitude to the Lord for His blessings and goodness to you.

### **Object for Thanksgiving, 13:15**

*...to His name.*

There are some these days who are fine with voicing their thanks but their version of gratitude isn't really directed toward the Lord. They are just happy with the way life has turned out for them, so they are happy about things and are glad to be living in the circumstances in which they are living. But, this passage says true, biblical thanksgiving should be directed toward Someone. We should give thanks *to His name*. That changes things. That makes it more personal doesn't it? What if you gave someone a gift and they addressed their thank you note to everyone in the world?

### **Oversight of Thanksgiving, 13:16**

*16 But do not forget...*

Verse 16 begins with only four words, but these four words give me chills. *But do not forget...* You know what? When it comes to going back to the Lord and saying, "Thank you!" I am afraid that I resemble the nine lepers who were healed who evidently forgot to go back to show their appreciation to the Lord for their healing. But in Luke 17:11-19 Jesus says that there was only one out of ten lepers who remembered the importance of going back with gratitude. May I grow in becoming more like that one who was genuinely thankful.

### **Overflow of Thanksgiving, 13:16**

*...to do good and to share...*

When a person is thankful for all that the Lord has given to them, I think there is a natural overflow of that gratitude toward other people. They enjoy sharing some of what the Lord has entrusted to them. It doesn't have to be expensive. It can just be a word of encouragement or a smile or even time spent together.

## **Outcome of Thanksgiving, 13:16**

*...for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

I like the way this text ends. It concludes by illustrating what the end result is when we mature into a grateful rather than a grumpy person. It says, "*for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*" Sometimes we agonize over how we can make a difference in our world and how we can really glorify the Lord in our life. There is a quiet simplicity about this that we may miss. God will be well pleased if we will just be thankful for what we have. I think that is something all of us can do even if we cannot sing or give millions of dollars or win thousands to Christ.

So, why not lead your family to truly give thanks around the table or over the cell phone in FaceTime this Thanksgiving? Hopefully, it will not be a repeat of one Grandmother who pointed to a painting of the Pilgrims on their way to the first Thanksgiving meal on a greeting card. She said to a pouting grandchild who wanted to watch some more tv rather than come to the Thanksgiving table, "Look! The Pilgrim children enjoyed going to church with their mothers and fathers and praying to God!" To which the young child replied, "Oh, yea? Well, then why is their Dad carrying that shotgun over his shoulder?" I believe it is time for thanksgiving, and it should flow freely from our hearts.