

## Ephesians 5

*“<sup>1</sup>Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. <sup>2</sup>And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. <sup>3</sup>But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. <sup>4</sup>Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, **but instead let there be thanksgiving.**”*

### Introduction

**The power of Thanksgiving is so much more than warm thoughts toward others.** Thanksgiving unleashes a mighty work against inward destructive and ensnaring desires that rise up within each human being. These desires turn our focus away from God, direct us to mistrust Him and bring us into a mindset of discontentment and despair. Paul wanted the readers of this letter to understand the hope and the power of proper thanksgiving. In this season called “Thanksgiving” let’s look at its’ power in our lives.

The original readers of Ephesians 5 would have grasped a framework of the following doctrine. So in order to read it and interpret this properly, let’s review.

- God’s revelation to man presents mankind as being broken.
- God’s word points to every person having a problem within, a bent to think and do things that are wrong. This bent to think and do wrong is because of the choice of Adam, the first created human being, who chose to willfully disobey God’s command (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12). Adam’s choice brought sin into the world and placed creation and humanity under a dominion of evil that has an agenda to steal, kill and destroy all that is good, wholesome and honorable (Romans 8:26, John 10:10).
- God has through the work of Christ defeated evil by perfectly keeping the law, then paying for the sin of the world (John 1:29). This payment was made by Eternal God the Son, who shed his blood as payment on the cross. This perfect sacrifice and shed blood of Christ met the just demands of the Law of God.
- The mending of brokenness is now possible. The work of Christ provides a way for each person to be restored to God. This way is by placing your faith in what Christ has done. This decision of repentance and trust restores your relationship with God, your creator. It launches the work of Christ within and His Spirit begins to mend the brokenness. Those that choose to put their trust in Christ become children of God. They

have eternal life with God in heaven, and have the privilege to walk with God the Son, Jesus Christ, in this life through the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus sent into this world (John 16). One radical proof of God’s satisfaction and this work being accomplished is the resurrection of God the Son. Furthermore, His ascension to the right hand of God the Father.

- Jesus Christ today is at God the Father’s right hand. Jesus Christ has all authority and as result is extremely and intimately active in this world.
- The continued work of God will culminate in the return of Christ to eradicate evil completely from God’s creation and restore and renew creation (I Corinthians 15; 2 Peter 3).

This thumbnail of doctrine would have been a presupposition to the reader’s understanding of this text. It helps you and I today understand the power of thanksgiving presented in this text.

### **1. Thanksgiving is a Powerful Contrast**

Focus with me on the last phrase of Ephesians 5:4. It is emboldened in this devotion. Notice these two words, “but” and “instead.”

**“But” is a contrasting conjunction. “Instead” not only emphasizes the contrast, it points to an antonym action; an action that counters the actions presented previously.**

Thanksgiving is one act against 6 categories of previous actions. It is as if “thanksgiving” has the ability to take on and defeat the gang of “sexual immorality, all impurity, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talk, crude joking!”

Do you see that? This is the punch line of this text. It is a powerful contrast.

Please note that “thanksgiving” is not presented as just a sentimental warm thought directed to others. No, it appears to be quite the powerful offensive spiritual weapon.

Thanksgiving aggressively takes on the gang of self-destroying, unholy, others attacking, community destroying aggressive actions. In other words, **thanksgiving is one seriously powerful weapon.**

Do you see “giving thanks to God this way?”  
What makes thanksgiving so powerful?

## 2. The Power of Thanksgiving

The context of Ephesians 5 points to the source of thanksgiving. The power of thanksgiving comes from giving direct thanks to God. Consider how grateful a person is when he appreciates a gift received but forgets to thank the gift giver. You would say that a connection is missing.

The response to others, who are not the gift giver, may be heard as a warm sentiment, but it would be an ignorant gesture against the gift giver if there were no response.

How much more is our responsibility with thanksgiving to direct our thanks ultimately to God who is our very life giver and sustainer? God, Himself, is the giver of all good gifts. He is the one to be thanked! There is no life, no wealth, no health, no ability to interact with others, or experience anything without God.

## 3. What does Thanksgiving to God do?

What happens when God is truly thanked in our thanksgiving? The text points out that true thanksgiving to God is spiritual warfare. God points this out in Ephesians 5:4 - **“but instead let there be thanksgiving.”**

Thanksgiving has power to defeat covetousness and discontentment because thanksgiving is worship to God.

Covetousness is called idolatry (Colossians 3:5), and because this desire easily leads a person outside the will of God it also leads them away from the worship of God. This is clarified by looking at the Ten Commandments.

The Tenth Commandment states: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s, Exodus 20:17.” What does coveting do? “When a person covets, he allows the desire for that which is coveted to govern his relationship with other people; this may become the motivation for murder, stealing, or lying either to attain the desired thing or to keep it from someone else. Because of the way coveting values a particular thing over trust and obedience to the Lord, it is a breach of the first commandment, which the Apostle makes clear when he refers to coveting as idolatry.”<sup>1</sup>

Coveting can rule a person bringing them into addictive behavior and worse turn them away from God to worship other things that become a god to them.

That happens in steps and one of the first plateaus of covetousness work is the plateau of questioning the goodness of God. The account of Genesis 3 portrays the dialogue between the serpent and Eve. Eve’s questioning of God’s goodness leads to covetousness. “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate” (Gen. 3:6).

The Bible tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but the work of covetousness produced a far different idea: “if you disobey God you will be wise!”

If Eve would have only applied thanksgiving for all that God had provided. She was in paradise and it would have been a different story. Thanksgiving opens our eyes to the goodness of God. It destroys the work of covetousness and discontentment that work to a contrary end. Thanksgiving brings zest and joy to life and the contrary brings despair and enslavement.

The power of Thanksgiving is coming to God, humbling ourselves before Him, and acknowledging that He alone is authority. “All good gifts come down from the Father of Lights with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17). In other words, God is the only giver of good gifts and He does not change!

So in this day of disunity give thanks for the cross of Christ who died for all men and has called us to live a life of love! On this day of rampant immorality give thanks to God who is Holy and good and righteous. On this day when there are poor, thank God for what you have and be godly and share. On this day when hearts are broken turn to the One who gave Himself up as a fragrant offering to mend all that is broken.

In 1993 Don Moen put these words of Kenneth Barker, Andy and Claire Cloninger, and Harry Smith to music. It is simply titled:

Give Thanks!

Give thanks with a grateful heart

Give thanks to the Holy One

Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

And now let the weak say, "I am strong"

Let the poor say, "I am rich

Because of what the Lord has done for us"

And now let the weak say, "I am strong"

Let the poor say, "I am rich

Because of what the Lord has done for us"

Give thanks with a grateful heart (with a grateful heart)

Give thanks to the Holy One (to the Holy One)

Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

Give thanks...

<sup>1</sup> ESV Study Bible, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008) Exodus 20:17 note, p.177