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## The Greatest Example of Gratitude

Matthew 26:26-28

*Thanksgiving is a special time we set aside to take stock of all for which we have to be grateful. It is helpful to stop and contemplate all that God has given us and all that He has done for us. This Thanksgiving, in addition to "counting our blessings" let us consider something else that will help us to be grateful as we should. When we look at the greatest example of gratitude, Jesus Christ Himself, it will help to constantly be deeply thankful to the Lord.*

### The Bible Encourages and Commands Us to Be Thankful

The Psalms are full of songs expressing thanksgiving to God for His blessings and for His grace and mercy. In it believers are exhorted to thank God for His lovingkindness and His wonderful works. Psalm 107 is just one example of the over 100 times we are exhorted to "Give Thanks to the Lord".

The New Testament is full of examples and exhortations for the believer to give thanks. In 1 Cor. 9:15 Paul thanks God for the indescribable gift of His Son. In Col. 1:9-13 Paul write of how we "**joyously give thanks**" for all that God has done for us. In Col. 2:7 he says we should be "**overflowing with gratitude**". In Col. 3:15-17 we see Paul challenge believers three times to give thanks as an automatic response from those who have been given so much through Christ. Gratitude should be a constant, prominent characteristic of believers. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 Paul informs us we to "**...In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus**".

### Ungratefulness is a Grievous Sin

Though we realize we have so much for which to be grateful; and we know we are exhorted to be thankful in the Bible; how often are we ungrateful, forget to give thanks, or simply take for granted all that God has given us? The history of God's people in the Old Testament is mostly a cycle of God blessing and delivering in spectacular ways, then them failing to be thankful, grumbling, murmuring,

and rebelling against Him. In Romans Paul describes the descent of people and society into the depths of depravity. One of the steps downward is failing to be thankful! (Romans 1:21). In 2 Timothy Paul adds ungratefulness to a list of serious and heinous sins (2 Tim. 3:2). In Luke 17 we see a poignant account of 10 men healed from leprosy but only one of them stopping to thank Jesus for their healing (Luke 17:11-19). We know how we respond when people are ungrateful towards us. How much worse is it when we are ungrateful towards God Who has given us so much!

If we are honest with ourselves, we must confess we are not thankful as constantly as we should be. We are likely not as thankful to the extent we should be. This brings up the question, How can we grow and maintain a greater measure of Thankfulness? It certainly helps to set aside time to take stock of all for which we have to be thankful. By looking at Jesus, the greatest example of gratitude, we can find even greater encouragement to be thankful as we should.

### Jesus was the Perfect Example of Thankfulness

We are once again confronted with the mystery of what it meant for God the Son to take on a human nature – submissive and dependent upon the God that Father. We also know that Jesus came to earth not just to die for our sin, but to live a perfect life of complete obedience to God. In His sinless perfection Jesus was thankful!

*“Without doubt, Jesus is the most thankful person that ever walked the face of the earth. Jesus expressed full and unceasing gratitude to His Father for every provision, every kindness, every protection, every soul-strengthening support and every miraculous act that the Father worked through Him during His earthly ministry.”<sup>1</sup>*

We see examples of Jesus’ gratitude recorded for us in the Gospels.

### ***Jesus Was Thankful for the Miracles God Did Through Him that Proved He was the Savior***

In John 6 Jesus gave thanks as He prepared to feed 5000 people with five loaves and two fish. In John 11 Jesus thanks God as He prepares to raise Lazarus from the dead, doing so that the people might believe that God had sent Him (Luke 11:41-42). These were important miracles as Jesus goes on to share “I am the Bread of Life” and “I am the Resurrection and the Life”. In both cases Jesus thanks God for working those miracles through Him that proved He was the Savior.

### ***Jesus Was Thankful for God’s Work in the Salvation of Sinful People***

As Jesus is about to extend the wondrous invitation to come to Him and find rest for their souls, He thanks God for how He has worked to provide salvation for those who will repent and believe: “**...At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants” (Matthew 11:25).** “Praise” includes the idea of giving thanks. Jesus thanked God that He had not chosen to reveal himself to the wise and intelligent, but to those such as the disciples.

### ***Jesus Was Thankful for the Salvation Provided by His Suffering***

Most amazing is the fact that Jesus was thankful for His own suffering which would lead to our salvation. In Matthew 26 we read of Jesus and His disciples gathered as the Last Supper:

*<sup>26</sup> While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” <sup>27</sup> And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them,*

*saying, “Drink from it, all of you; <sup>28</sup> for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.*

### ***Matthew 26:26-28***

At first glance, we might think Jesus is simply thanking God for the meal. However it is clear He is thanking God for His body which was to be beaten and broken and for His blood which was to be poured out. This is truly amazing when we consider all the suffering He endured. The grief in the garden. The suffering on the cross. The weight of our sin as He cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Why was He thankful in the face of such suffering? Because He knew His suffering would lead to the forgiveness of sins of many! Hebrews tell us it was for the joy that was set before Him that He endured the cross (Heb. 12:2).

- As we come to Thanksgiving Christ’s example reminds us of what we really have for which to be thankful. Our sins of ingratitude alone are enough to condemn us eternally. Yet Jesus came and lived a life of perfect gratitude. He suffered and died that our ingratitude might be forgiven, and His perfect gratitude credited to us.
- We also learn from Jesus’ example how we can be grateful even in the face of suffering, challenges, and trials. We remember our salvation. We keep our eyes on God and His glory rather than the immediate circumstances. We keep the end in view, knowing God is working all things towards the day we will be like Christ when we are with Him in glory!

<sup>1</sup>Batzig, Nicholas. A Thanksgiving Jesus.

[www.feedingonchrist.com/thankfulness-jesus](http://www.feedingonchrist.com/thankfulness-jesus). Some material for this study has been adapted from Pastor Batzig’s article.

#### **BIBLE STUDIES**

Thursdays, 12:00 Noon

MCMANUS (House) CONFERENCE ROOM

(252-M Located by minority offices near House chamber)