

What About...Being Thankful...In The New Testament

By **DARAN ARMSTRONG**

Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Giving thanks, thanksgiving, or being thankful, is referenced in the New Testament 52 times. A word used over and over again in Scripture shouldn't be glanced over or minimized. However, it seems that's what we have done with the words "thanks" and "thankful." Webster's dictionary defines thankful as: "glad that something has happened or not happened, that something or someone exists, etc." In the New Testament, the Greek word for thankful is εὐχάριστος (*eucharistos*) and is translated grateful or beholden. My definition:

Thankfulness is an appreciation or gratitude for a benefit received

COVID-19 has certainly changed life as we are used to living it, at least for the foreseeable future. For the months of March, April, and May 2020, social distancing, facemasks, and self-quarantines, became the so-called "new normal." There were many negative

things that happened as a result of the virus, but there were also some positives. While hunkering down with my family (my wife and I have 5 sons), we started to notice more arguments and more complaining than usual. Our solution to this issue was to have everyone write down 5 things they were thankful for, not just once, but for 7 days in a row. The things we were thankful for varied greatly and the effect was immediate and positive. Being thankful took on a whole new meaning for me after I reviewed everyone's daily thankfulness notes. As a result, I discovered a few things about pride and its relationship to being thankful:

1. Be careful not to make being thankful illegitimate

The Pharisee stood and was praying to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector...' (Luke 18:11).

Jesus said that it was wrong for us to exalt ourselves (Luke 18:14) and to view others with contempt (Luke 18:9).

- One way thankfulness can be illegitimate is thinking, "I'm thankful that I'm great looking," "I'm thankful I'm so intelligent," or "I'm thankful that I'm a great athlete." This kind of thankfulness may be derived from a feeling of self-worth (pride). It is possible to be thankful for these things, but it would

- be very difficult not to have an inflated self-opinion.
- Another way in which people make being thankful illegitimate is to relish in another's misfortune. A few examples are feeling glad when someone else gets injured, gets divorced, loses a job, or even dies. Wishing for, hoping for, or asking God for another's misfortune is sin.

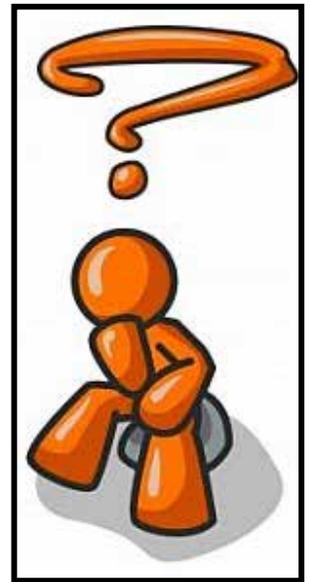
Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink..." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:19-21).

2. The more you think you deserve something, the less thankful you are

Pride is value independent from God. Humility is value dependent on God. Thinking you deserve something is like thanking yourself—this is pride!

- *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world (1 John 2:16).*
- *For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself (Galatians 6:3).*
- *...haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, ... (Romans 1:30).*

The Biblical example that comes to mind is the story of the prodigal son. In Luke 15, Jesus told a parable about



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a rich man with two sons. The younger son asked for his share of the estate, and the father divided his wealth and gave the young man his share. There is no mention of the son even saying thank you. The younger son thought he deserved (pride) the money, and it is obvious from the context that he had no intention of returning home. The young man spent all his money foolishly and had to get a job feeding pigs, so he could eat. Finally, the son woke up, took responsibility for his actions, and repented for his sin. *And the son said to his father, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be your son"* (Luke 15:21). The younger son was only thankful when he realized he didn't deserve (humility) what he had been given (benefit received).

3. To whom we are thankful is of the utmost importance

For us to receive a benefit, there must be a benefactor – a giver. God is the Creator of all things. Everything we have, is given to us by Him.

For by Him all things, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together (Colossians 1:16-17).

No matter what the situation or circumstance, ultimately, the only one who deserves to be thanked is God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We can and should be thankful to others when given any gift, help, courtesy, etc. But do not forget to also thank God—from whom all blessings flow! Conversely, beware of giving thanks to other gods or things the Living God has created (earth, sun, moon, etc.). For example, giving thanks to Vishnu or Allah is blasphemy. Giving thanks to mother earth or the sun is idolatry.

Believers in Jesus Christ have at least one huge reason to be thankful. All of us are sinners, and we do not deserve salvation!

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

It has been my experience that thankful people are less anxious, more content, and are all-around the happiest people (Philippians 4:6-7). When we are thankful, we get rid of pride! Therein lies the reason to

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