

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG224 – Thanksgiving, A Time of Gratitude

Hello and welcome to this podcast. What I would like to speak about today is our celebration of Thanksgiving. When this podcast is released, we will be about a day away from Thanksgiving Day in North America, and I feel like it is something that we need to put our focus on. I am looking personally to see something maybe new, different, in an expression. I really do not want just to have a day of thanksgiving; personally, what I am looking for is to reach in to the reality of launching myself into a life of thankfulness and gratitude, and I think the Word of God kind of expresses this attitude for us.

Now generally, when we celebrate Thanksgiving, it is a wonderful thing, and we do express thanks for many things; but it is kind of an expression that is done for that day, and then we tend to go back into our lives. I want to have something much deeper than that for myself, and hopefully this is also alive and real for all of you who are listening. The Scripture talks about the Levites in First Chronicles 23, starting at verse 30. God was commanding Moses what the Levites were to do after they get into the land and there is a Temple, and all of this. Because before this time, the Levites, of course, are mainly packing up the Tent of Meetings, the Tabernacle, and carrying it through the wilderness, and so forth. So, when they get into the Promised Land, then there is no longer that responsibility, and there is kind of a new thing that He is looking for the Levites to be involved with. That is what verse 30 is speaking to. It says, "They are to stand every morning to thank and to praise the Lord, and likewise at evening." So, there was this introduction of a new responsibility and a new ministry for the Levites. And somehow, I would like for us to enter into that kind of Levitical priesthood ministry in our own minds and hearts before God, that says, "Maybe it is time for us to find a new expression in our giving of thanks and our worship to the Lord."

Rather than just having a day of Thanksgiving, maybe we launch into really a life of gratitude before the Lord. I believe this is something that we see alluded to in the Scriptures. In Psalm 92, starting at verses 1-2, it says, "It is good to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning and your faithfulness by night." He then goes on to talk about his worship. Verses 3-5 say, "With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp, with resounding music upon the lyre. For You, O Lord, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands. How great are Your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep."

As we get into this, and if you go through and read many of the expressions in the Hebrew Scriptures about this idea of thanksgiving, we see that there is kind of a different nuance to the understanding of the word than what I think we apply to the concept of thanks today. As we know, going through life, words and meanings change in societies and cultures. I think we have experienced this for ourselves, at least I will speak for us in America, that we are kind of set into what thanks means. Usually, we give thanks for somebody doing something for us: "thank you" is the expression that we use. When we come to Thanksgiving, then we are kind of saying "thank you" for something, whatever that specific thing is. Many families go around the table and they each express thanks for something specific in their life or in that family. But I think that in truth, the word had a greater meaning than that. That is why I titled this podcast *Thanksgiving, A Time of Gratitude*, because I feel like gratitude is for us now a better expression.

Not that the words have that much difference, I am not trying to split hairs; but I am trying to paint a picture that we do not want just to say “thank you” for something, we want to develop in our hearts an attitude of gratitude. And that, for me, is going to be the new attitude that I want to take on in my life. I want to live with an attitude of gratitude all day long, as the Scripture is expressing it – in the morning we should be grateful, in the evening we should be grateful. We should be grateful to the Lord all day long.

When we use the word *grateful* in our culture today, I think it has a different, more powerful expression than just to give thanks. Now in the Hebrew Scriptures, as I said, it may not have been that way; but there is a different sense to the word when we look at the Hebrew. And so, I want to go to the Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words. This is a text that gives 200 Greek words and 200 Hebrew words, and it defines and explains those words. If we look up *thanksgiving* in this book, we find an article that says the following:

A thorough study of the use of this word in the Hebrew Bible can lead to one conclusion: Everywhere and in every situation, God’s people should continually give thanks to God, the One who has created and redeemed them.

The giving of thanks in the Old Testament is indicated most often by the Hebrew word *todah*, which is translated “thanks,” “thankfulness.” *Todah* is the noun that is formed from the verb *yadah*, which means “to throw” or “to cast.” In the causative stem of the verb, its most used stem, the word means “to give thanks,” or “to praise,” or “to lead.” This meaning possibly arose because of the gestures and physical involvement of the people toward God as they gave thanks.¹

When we look at this Hebraic expression of the idea of *yadah*, or the common word *todah* – we still say that in modern Hebrew today: “*todah rabah*,” “thank you very much.” But in the definition of the word, there is this physical gesture expression; it leads us back to this idea of the Levites, who were going to give thanks every morning and thanks in the evening. It gives us rise to think again about what we read in Psalm 92, about the fact that in giving thanks, it is more than just saying “thank you”; it was praise, it was worship unto God. And so, when we look at the word *gratitude*, it has a greater expression of this idea of praise, or worship, or something that is a physical action that goes on continually, rather than just an expression when somebody does something for you or you receive something.

We can give thanks to God because He blesses us, and we say, “Thank You, Lord, for that blessing.” But what I am looking to do is to go beyond just saying, “I want to thank God because today He did this for me,” or “He answered this prayer for me.” I do not want my relationship of gratitude to be limited to that. I want it to be something that every morning we give thanks and praise to the Lord, and likewise in the evening, as we read in Chronicles. So, when we have this ongoing sense of worship, I think it really lends itself more to the concept of gratitude than it does to the idea of thanks. Not necessarily that the definitions are that different, but I think culturally, we have come to a usage that makes their expression that different.

One of the fun things that I did, because everybody is talking about AI these days, so I did a search through my browser of this idea, “What is the difference between thanks and gratitude?” I am not sure

¹ Carpenter, Eugene E., and Philip W. Comfort. *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and Explained*, 2000: p 188. Print.

the depth of where it reached for the references to summarize, but it brought back some really fun things in the summary which go along with what we are talking about. It says,

Based on the search results, there is a subtle difference between thanks and gratitude. Here is a breakdown: *Thanks* typically implies a response to a specific benefit or action, often expressed as a polite phrase, "Thank you." We have a brief acknowledgement of something that was specific. [So again, it has taken on this meaning that thanks is a specific action that is being recognized, and it is a polite phrase that we use to express that thanks.] It can be a positive expression, acknowledging the receipt of something, a favor, a gift, a service. *Gratitude*, however, on the other hand is a more active and intentional emotion.

This is part of what I really like about where this goes in my heart. I think that when we talk about gratitude, it is not just an action, it is an emotion that is being expressed from within the depth of our being. That is why I think in the Hebrew Scriptures, thanks is really more defined as praise than it is the word "thank you." Praise, in the Hebrew context, was an expression with music and physical, outward expression – like David when he takes off his clothes and he is dancing before the Lord, and when he assigns musicians in the Temple service, and things like this; because it is needing this physical expression that is coming from deep within our being that is an ongoing expression to God of our gratitude for who He is, for what He is, for all that He is, for all that He does and all that He has done. Therefore, it is not isolated to one specific gift or one specific favor or answer to prayer that He has given us; it becomes something that we develop within ourselves, within the depth of our being as part of our relationship to God, to say, "We are grateful to You, Lord, for all things, not just for one or two things."

This is why I believe the Scripture is expressing that when we get up in the morning, we should express gratitude. For what? – we just got up. Maybe we express gratitude that we woke up, and that we are still alive; but it is more than that. It is an expression of, "You are God. You are the Creator of the universe. There is no one like You, and all things that exist around me and through me and in me, and in the material as well as the spiritual world about me, are made by You, and they are provided for me in this earth; and I am grateful. I am grateful to You, Lord, for all of these things. No one could do this, no one could be this, other than You." So, that is what I am looking for. I am looking to really achieve a level of gratitude, a level of expression to Him that is far more akin to worship and praise than it is to the words "thank you."

It goes on in this AI report – and again, it was very fun to see how much it captured kind of what I was looking for. It says,

Gratitude can be a mindset, an attitude, rather than just a response to a specific event. Gratitude is often described as a choice or a practice, whereas thankfulness can be more of an automatic response. Gratitude involves a sense of appreciation and acknowledgement, whereas thankfulness might be more focused on the receipt of a benefit. Gratitude can be a more profound and lasting emotion, whereas thankfulness might be a fleeting response.

What I like about this, and I like the fact that it is from an AI response, is that it is reading "out there" what today's grasp of these terms is. And that is exactly what was so deep in my heart of getting into this idea of saying that Thanksgiving is a time of gratitude. Rather than just having a day of saying "thank you," I want it to be a launching into a life of gratitude before the Lord; because there is that difference now in the way we have come to understand what thanks means, what gratitude means.

It goes on to say, "In summary, while thanks and gratitude are often used interchangeably, gratitude implies a deeper, more intentional appreciation and acknowledgement of the good things in one's life, whereas thanks is a more surface-level expression of acknowledgment." I think that this really is helpful; and it was interesting to me that this AI report goes on to give some ideas about gratitude and how to maybe express it, or get into an expression. You want to have some kind of an activity and develop an intentional emotion. And that probably is the greatest thing to me, that gratitude is an emotion I believe we can develop in our lives, and we can express from our lives in this praise and gratitude towards the Lord continually.

I want to be able to develop the emotion. You say, "Well, emotions are something that just happen as a response to what is going on around you. Somebody does something wonderful, then I am happy. Something goes bad, then I am sad." Our surroundings should not control us. We should be in control of ourselves no matter what our surroundings bring. Therefore, if we get into difficulties, we can be grateful to the Lord for all of the wonderful things that He is and all of the wonderful things He does constantly. We do not have to focus on the trouble that we are in at the moment, or the negative situations that we may be facing – we can literally recognize those, but go, "You know what? That is not going to control me. That is not what I am going to allow my mind to focus upon. I am going to be grateful to the Lord, and start looking to all that we have and all that He has done," and develop in ourselves this sense, this wonder, of gratitude towards God for all that He is and all that He does.

So, we do not want to be into this passive expression of a thanks; we want to begin to develop a mindset or an attitude, and especially an emotion, of gratitude before the Lord. We can develop this, and there are things you can do. I encourage you to do some research into it, to study things that can help you express gratitude. One thing you can do is write things down. When you get up in the morning, you say, "How do I walk in that Scripture about expressing, morning and evening, thanks and praise to the Lord?" Well, begin writing things down. Get up in the morning, and before you just jump out of bed and run for the coffee maker, write down what you are grateful for, or what you are going to be grateful for this day. What are you going to focus on that God has done in your life that is just amazing, and what He has provided in the world? Be grateful that there is air that we breathe – that is something we did not make ourselves, He made it for us. He provided it for us. He has provided all things for us pertaining to life and godliness, and therefore, there is an unending list and an unending focus of what we should be giving praise and thanks to the Lord for.

I just want to encourage us as we go into this day of Thanksgiving, that we make something more out of it than we have in the past. Let's make it a lifestyle, not just a day in our life, but a lifestyle that we find in our walk with God before the Lord going forward from this point.

I want to read one more Scripture out of Colossians the second chapter, at verses 6-7. It says, "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him... [see, we are growing up in God in these things, so we should grow in our gratitude] now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude." This is important for us to recognize, that God has met us, He has established us, we are now being built up in Him, and our faith is growing. We have been instructed in our relationship with Him, and we should, in our relationship with Christ, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be overflowing with gratitude.

So I bless us all during this day of Thanksgiving, that we really use it as a launching pad for our tomorrows; and that we realize that we, as believers, can develop that emotion of gratitude until,

as Colossians said, we are literally overflowing with gratitude. I bless this. I bless your Thanksgiving Day with your family, your friends. Let this be the focal point of what we are reaching in for, what we are believing for, to be established in our hearts and minds during this time of Thanksgiving celebration. It is a Thanksgiving of gratitude.

Amen.