



RESURRECTION CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

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EVANGELIZING THE HEART OF THE BELIEVER

Letters of Faith

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**“He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me;
And to him who orders his way aright
I shall show the salvation of God.”**

Psalm 50:23

Dearly Beloved,

The Scriptural admonitions to give thanks to our God and to praise His Name are multitudinous, the benefits promised with our thanksgiving are mighty, and the results of our not giving thanks are too monstrous to meditate.

It is a great privilege for us to be able to honor the One, True, HOLY, and Almighty God of the universe with praise and thanksgiving! We've emphasized Holy because all other gods are man-made and have serious unholy human traits and flaws. Yet this awesome privilege is as simple as giving thanks! Well, maybe not quite that simple because the Word says there is the special experience of offering a *sacrifice* of thanksgiving.

As we reviewed the Scriptures for "thanks" and "thanksgiving" verses, we were amazed to find how very few there are in the Gospels compared to the Epistles, and also compared to the great number in the Old Testament Law and Prophets. We were even more intrigued to realize that with only two exceptions, the "thanksgiving" verses in the Gospels were all recording Jesus giving thanks to His Father as He broke bread and initiated Communion.

The first of these exceptions is found in Luke 2:36-38, **“And there was a prophetess, Anna...And she never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. And at that very moment (the moment Joseph and Mary brought the newborn baby Jesus to the Temple) she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.”** Anna recognized Jesus as the Messiah and gave thanks to God in thanksgiving, prophecy, and prayer! She seemingly restarted the flow of thanksgiving to God from His people that had apparently dried up for well over 400 years.

That's right, chronologically the last time the word "thank," or "thanks," or "thanksgiving" is used in the Old Testament is in Daniel 6:10 where Daniel **“...continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously”** even though he knew that King Darius had decreed that anyone who makes a petition to any "god" or man beside himself would be cast into the lions' den.

Daniel was prepared to give the ultimate sacrifice of thanksgiving: he put his life on the line! And God fulfilled Psalm 50:23 in his life by closing the lions' mouths, and using that to bring King Darius to see the light of God's salvation: **“I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God and enduring forever, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, and His dominion will be forever. He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, Who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.”** (Daniel 6:26-27).

The other reference to giving thanks to God in the Gospels (except where Jesus gave thanks to His Father) is in Luke 17:11-18. Jesus cleansed ten lepers, and then (vs. 15), **“...one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answered and said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they? Were none found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?’”**

It was obviously rare to hear thanksgiving to God in Palestine, so Jesus modeled to the people of Israel how to give thanks to the Father when He fed the multitudes and initiated the Lord’s Supper: He prayed publicly, giving thanks.

The Apostle Paul constantly emphasized the giving of thanks to God: **“...in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”** (1 Thessalonians 5:18), and, **“...always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;”** (Ephesians 5:20). Also **“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.”** and, **“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving”** (Colossians 3:15 & 4:2). He exhorted the young Church to give thanks to God so repeatedly because they were not in the habit of doing so!

Every November, Americans celebrate the national holiday of Thanksgiving. Christians corporately honor God by giving Him thanks for the mighty things He has done and for the mighty things yet to come from His hand. But don’t forget to also thank God for His answers to little, personal “flash prayers.” Remember His answers to the simple requests that no one else even knows about, the sweet secrets just between you and Him—the ones you haven’t even “formally” prayed for. These answers show you that He is aware of your unspoken thoughts, even about little, everyday things.

When we first moved out to the farm full-time, we had to traverse a long, twisting, gravel county road and ford several streams in order to get to our mailbox. Once there, we had to turn around very carefully to avoid getting stuck in the ditches on each side of the narrow road. *“If only the county would widen the opening of our road and lay some gravel on it,”* I sighed, as I tugged on the steering wheel of our 20-year-old farm truck.

As I approached the mailbox the next weekend, I had to rub my eyes in disbelief—there was fresh gravel spread on a widened entry to our road, just as I had imagined! I burst into thanksgiving! It was an answered un-prayed prayer. God saw the desire in my heart and fulfilled it!

Now is the time to establish being thankful and making thank offerings as a benchmark in our daily walk with God: **“...in everything... “** and **“...for all things...”**

If we learn now to give thanks for the abundance that often means so little, then in the future we will surely abundantly give thanks for the little that will mean so much.

It seems to us that America is becoming a thankless nation. Less and less do we hear a heart-felt “thank you,” which along with “please” is one of the “magic words” we learned in our youth. Both seem to be vanishing from today’s American vocabulary. Thankfulness in the heart must be expressed outwardly through word and deed, and thanksgiving must also be graciously received!

We said to a worship leader after an awesome service: “Thank you! That was beautiful! We were really blessed!” She quickly responded: “It is all Jesus! Don’t thank me! Praise the Lord! Give all the glory to God.”

Two hurtful things happened in this exchange. First, because our thanks was not received, we felt disappointed and frustrated. I actually had to resist the temptation to respond: “Well, it wasn’t THAT good!” Second, the worship leader was deprived of receiving the encouraging appreciation that God has prescribed as necessary for all of us to enjoy good spiritual and mental health.

The primary reason for experiences like this is a lack of understanding of God's grace and how we are to minister it and respond to it. God has created us to need loving affirmation from the Holy Spirit flowing through members of the Body of Christ, just as much as counsel and correction. If we cannot learn to accept positive inputs, we surely will struggle with receiving corrections! Even worse, we may subconsciously seek gratification of our God-given need for affirmation from some spiritually unlawful source.

You are not usurping God's glory by receiving compliments and thanks for something splendid that He has done through you! You only do that when you respond with thoughts of conceit and pride. Learn to graciously receive compliments, praise, and thanks. Enjoy them without embarrassment like: "Thank you! That is a real blessing to hear, and I accept it gratefully." Then, at the end of the day, present each one as a thanksgiving offering to your Heavenly Father. You are thus accepting the thank offering of the person you have been used by God to bless, and you are firmly receiving the praise as a trophy to present to your God. The circuit of grace is thus completed to the full glory of God.

Let us join together in giving special thanks to our God for the creation of the special governance here in America that has made us the envy of the whole world for our freedom and abundance of life.

Unfortunately, with this position of primacy comes great opposition from those less fortunate who are determined to "pull down" the leader at all costs. But even with all of our imperfections over the years, America has been, and still is, the one true bastion of freedom and liberty among all nations. Let us make thanking God for this a major part of our daily lives. That may be just what God is waiting to see for Him to release righteous leadership once more into our body politic.

Together we can give God thanks continuously in and through all things, and at all times be joined with the angels and saints around the throne of God, proclaiming: **"...blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."** (Revelation 7:12)

May thanksgiving always be found in your heart and on your lips, especially for this great nation "under God," and may you learn how to give and to receive thanks and praise to the glory of God our Father.

Thankful Hugs,

