

THANKSGIVING

In Luke 17:11-19 ten lepers were cleansed, but only one returned to give thanks and Jesus said: *"Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"*

At this time of year we in the United States celebrate an annual holiday designed for the purpose of giving thanks. The first Thanksgiving Proclamation of the United States, was October 3, 1789, issued by George Washington. *"...Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the twenty-sixth day of November next to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be;"* I have little doubt that most all in this country will celebrate this national holiday in some way. And I deem this to be appropriate because we as a nation have been blessed in so many ways even with all the problems this nation has.

There is a great need among God's people, to be thankful for all the blessings He provides for us. Consider the Psalmist: *"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD..."* Psa. 92:1. And the apostle Paul in Col 3:15 says: *"...and be ye thankful"*. These passages show us the need for giving thanks to God.

I am sure we all recognize the importance of giving thanks for our spiritual blessings Eph 1:3. The very salvation we have in Christ is something for which we should be thankful. Every person would be lost if not for God's Grace and Blood of Jesus Tit 2:11; 1Jhn 1:7. Therefore, we ought to be thankful to God that through our obedience we can be made free from sin and become servants of righteousness Rom 6:17, 18. In every prayer to God, let us thank Him for the salvation given to us through His Son Jesus.

We must recognize the blessing of God's care and leadership. Once salvation is obtained, God cares for and provides us with leadership 1Pet 5:6,7. To be led by God we must walk by His Spirit Rom 8:14. God continues to show His care and leadership in our lives, so be thankful for it.

We can be thankful for God using us to spread the Gospel. Paul was thankful that God was making His word known through himself and others 2Cor 2:14; 1Tim 1:12. We must use ourselves in spreading the Gospel of Christ Rom 12:1; 6:12,13. We should be thankful that the Gospel is being received. Those on Pentecost gladly received the word, were baptized and added to the Lord Acts 2:41. Some, even today, are still receptive to the gospel. We have had one precious soul added to the Lord here. We must continue our efforts to teach the lost Matt 28:19,20; 2Tim 2:2. Express your thanks to God for His help in teaching others His word.

We are thankful for our brothers and sisters in Christ. There are many examples of first century Christians giving God thanks for other Christians. Many of these are found at the beginning of Paul's epistles: such as Eph 1:15,16; Col 1:3; Philemon 4-ff; 1Thess 1:2,3; Phil 1:3-5 and 2Thess 1:3.

Along with our need to be thankful for all our spiritual blessing there is also the need to be thankful for all the physical blessings God showers on us. God indirectly provides us with the very food we eat. Yes, I know after man sinned in the garden God determined that he should earn his living by the sweat of his face Gen 3:19. But, without God providing the good soil, sunshine and rain no amount of labor on man's part could produce food. There are many passages which show that we should give thanks to God for our food Jhn 6:11; Matt 15:36; Acts 27:35. With each meal we should be reminded of God's loving kindness and bow our heads in thanksgiving. We should even give thanks for the clothes we wear, because if we put God and His kingdom first, He sees that we have what we need Matt 6:25-34. The Scriptures says we should give thanks for all things 1Thess 5:18.

From a personal standpoint there are many things for which I am thankful. I am thankful for you: for the *"tie that binds our hearts in Christian love"*; for those here who care for their brethren and share with them without hesitation when needed; for the loving friendships I see among brethren here. I am thankful for the diligent, faithful teachers who labor for hours to be prepared to teach classes. I am thankful for the opportunity given me to labor here. I am thankful for the children we are blessed with and those who will be here soon. I am thankful for those who realize their responsibility to give as prospered, liberally and cheerfully. Without such this congregation could not continue. I am thankful for those who utilize the abilities God has given them to lead singing, read scripture, wait on the Lord's table, lead in prayer, and present a lesson from God's word.

I am thankful for so many, many friends and brothers and sisters in Christ in so many places. I am thankful for a wonderful family: a loving, supportive wife; faithful children, (though not perfect); for faithful parents and in-laws who, though now have gone on to their reward, encouraged me in being faithful as a Christian and preaching the Gospel.

This article could go on and on, because the things for which we should be thankful are endless. Surely everyone can and should see we have a lot for which to be thankful. However, do we also understand that our thanks is not just to be expressed on one special day a year, but we must be engaged in giving thanks to God on a daily basis. If we are not doing so, we are, as we mentioned in the sermon on prayer, no better than the pigs eating acorns under the tree and never looking up to see the source of those acorns. Are we as thankful as we ought to be? (JLH)

(Thoughts from a sermon by Alex Ogden)