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THANKFULNESS

#190

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WHY ALL SHOULD BE THANKFUL

William Cooper (fl. 1653)

“In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”—1 Thessalonians 5:18.
The lesson, which the Holy Ghost would have us learn in the text, is thus summed up: *it is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning Christians that in everything they give thanks; that they be thankful, as our word is more proper to our purpose.*

For though we have nothing of our own that is good to give God but thanks, yet neither do we properly give Him *that*, seeing both our giving and the right manner of doing it are of the Lord (1Co 4:7; 1Ch 29:14; Phi 2:13). Our *continual praying* shows that we are always beggars, and our *continual thanksgiving* shows us always debtors. Our thanks then, indeed, is the rebound of mercy heavenward, whence it came, and a holy reflection of the warm sun-beams of God's benefits shining on us.

QUERY I: WHO ARE OR OUGHT TO BE THANKFUL?

ANSWER: *The Lord hath a return*[1] *and tribute of praise due to Him from all creatures.* David names animate and inanimate creatures and bids them sing hallelujah (Psa 147), as if all the world were but one concert of musical instruments tuned to God's glory. But He looks for it principally from men and angels; from *all* men.

It is charged as an inexcusable sin, incapable of any apology, upon natural men, "that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful" (Rom 1:21).

The law of thankfulness is written upon the hearts of Heathens as may be proved at large, not only from heathen instances, but [from] Scripture also: as the Philistines, when they had taken Samson and killed Saul (Jdg 16:24; 1Sa 31:9); and Belshazzar, who "praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone" (Dan 5:23); which although it be enough to shame unthankful Christians, yet it signified little. For all wicked men, though they have cause, yet they have no heart to this work, at least not often nor at all as it should be.

The persons engaged and most bound to this duty are the Thessalonians that believed and all the faithful upon the same account.

THANKFULNESS DESCRIBED: all the service we perform to God—worship, the duties of both Tables,[2] yea, and the whole work of our Christian obedience in a holy conversation[3]—be but a return of thankfulness unto God. Yet thanksgiving, in the text and doctrine, is taken more strictly for a particular part of God's worship distinct from prayer, which sometimes includes praise and thanks too, by which we render due praise to God for all or any of His benefits promised or bestowed, and that with our hearts, lips, and lives.

Some affirm that much of religion is seen in piety to parents, observance to our betters, and thankfulness to our benefactors.[4] God is indeed all these to us. Yet the proper notion of our thankfulness refers to God as our benefactor, [and] every benefit from God makes the receiver a debtor. Thankfulness is rather the *confessing* of our debt than the payment of it; and forasmuch as we are bound always to be thankful, it doth acknowledge we are always beholden[5] to God and always insolvent.[6]

Now, a child of God is bound to be thankful to God above all men because,

1. He is more competent than any other—by acts of reason and grace too. All that the Scripture speaks as to the duty of thankfulness may be referred to these heads: 1. to know and acknowledge the Lord's mercies; 2. to remember them, that is, to record and commemorate them; 3. to value and admire them; and 4. to blaze and proclaim them.

In all which a gracious soul is much more competent than a mere natural man, though endued with quick understanding, strong memory, and great eloquence. For the Spirit of God hath enlightened [the believer's] soul, and taught him this lesson: he is principled[7] for it; he is a well-tuned instrument; his heart boileth with good matter; and his "tongue is the pen of a ready writer," as David speaks on this occasion, when he spake of the praises of the king in his "Song of loves" (Psa 45:1).

This Spirit of God in a thankful soul is as the breath of the organ, without which the pipes make no sound; yea, as the breath of the trumpeter, by which the trumpet gives a certain and melodious sound.

This is [what] makes that noble evangelical spirit, yea, that heavenly angelical spirit in Christians. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 5:18-20), [which shows] that what wine doth in poets and good-fellows[8]—it makes them sing and roar out catches[9] by which they make music to the devil—so the Spirit of God in saints is the principle of all true thankfulness and holy joy towards God. And indeed there was a very gracious frame of spirit this way in primitive Christians.

2. He is more concerned than any other—as having received more than others. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luk 12:48), [meaning] a proportion of *duty* [is due] according to the degree of every portion of *mercy*, whether you consider what is given or what is forgiven you.

There are two things which every gracious soul will acknowledge: “No man,” saith he, “in the world hath deserved less of God than I; and none hath received more of God than I. How much then, am I concerned to be thankful!”

I have read of a holy man, that was seen once standing still with tears in his eyes and looking up to heaven. And being asked by one that passed by why he did so, said, “I admire the Lord’s mercy to me that did not make me a toad,” that vermin[1]0 being then casually at his feet.

The least common mercy affects a gracious soul that knows [he deserves] nothing but misery. Mephibosheth “bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?” (2Sa 9:8), when David had told him he should have his lands and eat bread at his table. When the Lord spares our lives and gives us common mercies, we must admire and adore His goodness.

QUERY II: WHY AND UPON WHAT GROUNDS ARE CHRISTIANS BOUND TO GIVE THANKS IN EVERYTHING?

Answer 1: It is the will of God in Christ Jesus. The will of God in Christ Jesus is the clearest rule and the highest obligation to any soul for the performance of any duty. O that men would nowadays study more, act by, and hold fast to this rule, [asking] conscience in the performance of every duty, “Is this the will of God in Christ Jesus?”

It was meet[11] that this duty of thankfulness should be pressed and practiced under the Gospel because it argues a spiritual and noble frame of soul, the highest pitch of grace, which is a true Gospel-frame.

David, under the Old Testament, had a New Testament heart in this particular: his Psalms, which were all penned upon emergent[12] occasions, are all *tehillah* and *tephilla*, “prayer and praise.” His heart and harp were so tuned to the praises of God, to “Psalms of Degrees,” to “Hallelujahs,” that some have thought the Lord is praised with those psalms in heaven. Yet is it promised under the Gospel, that “he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David” (Zec 12:8), which some understand as to praise and thanksgivings upon the account of Gospel grace.

More punctually,[1]3 “this is the will of God in Christ Jesus,” that is, Jesus Christ shows us the duty of thankfulness both by pattern and by precept; for He was not only ushered into the world with songs of thanksgiving by angels, by Zachary, by Mary, by Simeon, by the shepherds (Luk 1:46, 68; 2:13, 14, 20, 29); but the Lord Jesus Himself was a great Pattern and Precedent of thankfulness all His life long and in this also was a true Son of David. He thanked God frequently and fervently: “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Mat 11:25), when His disciples preached and cast out devils. Thus also when He raised Lazarus: “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me” (Joh 11:41). When He was to eat common bread, He blessed it with giving of thanks (Mar 8:6), much more consecrated bread (Luk 22:19). Thus was He a pattern of thankfulness: He did “in every thing give thanks.”

In like manner we find Him reproving the nine lepers for their unthankfulness (Luk 17:17, 18), which shows that He held out thankfulness as a duty. Personally, He gave a pattern and precept for it.

Now, though this were enough to show it [to be] “the will of God in Christ Jesus,” yet these words reach further, namely, to show that it is the strain of the Gospel in the Apostles’ doctrine and practice. For they through their commission and the great measure of God’s Spirit in them declared “the will of God in Christ Jesus.” “They worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen” (Luk 24:52, 53).

What the Apostle Paul’s spirit was in this, by whom so much of “the will of God in Christ Jesus” is revealed and penned, I need not rehearse; for all his Epistles breathe out the praises of God’s grace.

Answer 2: Thanks and praise is the homage we owe to God for all we have and are— therefore, in everything to be rendered. We live precariously[14] and at mercy: “But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1Co 15:10). God in His sovereignty might have left us in the womb of nothing and never made us [or] have crushed us into nothing as soon as He made us, for “hath not the potter power over the clay?” (Rom 9:21) Every moment we depend on Him and hold all from Him (Acts 17:28); His power over us is arbitrary[15] and infinite; to this sovereign God we owe all and therefore our thanks: “Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to

him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:35, 36). For not considering this, Belshazzar smarted: “The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified” (Dan 5:23). The birds that lift up their bills at every drop they take may mind[16] us of this duty. Common and constant mercies deserve special thanks, because constant.

ANSWER 3: *Christians must give thanks in every thing because they have spiritual mercies innumerable and invaluable superadded[17] to common mercies*—special and spiritual mercies in Christ Jesus: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ” (Eph 1:3). “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible” (1Pe 1:3, 4). “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation” (2Co 1:3, 4).

The decreeing and sending of Jesus Christ to and for poor sinners; the opening a fountain of grace in and by Him; the making and ratifying a covenant of grace, whereof the Lord Jesus is the Angel and Mediator; the precious promises, both absolute and conditional, thereupon; with all other choice Gospel-privileges of grace and glory, as far as God’s all-sufficiency, and the infinite merit, satisfaction, and righteousness of the Son of God can reach: this deserves a suitable proportion of thanks and blessing from us both here and in heaven. “Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee” (Psa 63:3), that is, I will render special and continual praise for this above all other things.

From Puritan Sermons 1659-1689, Being the Morning Exercises at Cripplegate, Vol 1, reprinted by Richard Owen Roberts, Publisher.

William Cooper (fl. 1653): Puritan divine of whom little is known. He published several sermons, some appearing in Annesly’s *Morning Exercises of Cripplegate* and annotated the book of Daniel in *Poole’s Commentary*.

1 **return** – repayment.

2 **Tables** – a reference to our obedience to the two Tables of God’s Law.

3 **conversation** – does not here mean *talk*, but rather behavior, lifestyle.

4 **benefactors** – one who renders aid or kindly service to others; a friendly helper.

5 **beholden** – under personal obligation for favors.

6 **insolvent** – unable to meet our debt.

7 **principled** – trained or instructed in certain principles.

8 **good-fellows** – jolly companions.

9 **catches** – originally, a short composition for three or more voices, which sing the same melody, the second singer beginning the first line as the first goes on to the second line, and so with each successive singer; a round. Subsequently specially applied to rounds in which the words are so arranged as to produce ludicrous effects, one singer catching at the words of another.

10 **vermin** – animals of a loathsome or offensive appearance or character, originally applied to reptiles, stealthy or slinking animals, or wild beasts.

11 **meet** – suitable; fit; proper.

12 **emergent** – urgent; pressing.

13 **punctually** – to the point; expressly.

14 **precariously** – by prayer and supplication; at the mercy of another.

15 **arbitrary** – absolute.

16 **mind** – remind; to bring to one’s mind.

17 **superadded** – added over and above.

THE DISPOSITION OF GOD’S PEOPLE

Richard Sibbes (1577-1635)

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort”—2 Corinthians 1:3.

We see here the heart of the blessed apostle, being warmed with the sense and taste of the sweet mercy of God, stirs up his tongue to bless God; a full heart and a full tongue. We have here the [over-flowing fullness], the abundance of his thankfulness breaking forth in his speech. His heart had first tasted of the sweet mercies and comforts of God before he praiseth God. The first thing that we will observe hence is, that

It is the disposition of God’s children, after they have tasted the sweet mercy and comfort and love of God, to break forth into the praising of God and to thanksgiving. It is as natural for the new creature to do so as for the birds to sing in the spring. When the sun hath warmed the poor creature, it shows its thankfulness in singing . . . it is natural for those creatures so to do, and we delight in them.

It is as natural for the new creature, when it feels the Sun of Righteousness warming the soul, when it tastes of the mercy of God in Christ, to show forth itself in thankfulness and praise; and it can no more be kept from it than fire can keep from burning or water from cooling. It is the nature of the new creature so to do.

The reason is, every creature must do the work for which God hath enabled it, to which God hath framed it. The happiness of the creature is in well-doing, in working according to its nature. The heathen could see that. Now all the creatures, the new creature especially, are for the glory of God in Christ Jesus. All the new creature, and what privileges it hath, and what graces it hath, all is, that God may have the glory of grace. Why then, it must needs work answerable to that which God hath created it for. Therefore it must show forth the praise and glory of God.

“Blessed be God,” saith the apostle (Eph 1:3); and the blessed apostle Peter begins his epistle, “Blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us to an inheritance immortal and undefiled, which fadeth not away, reserved for us in heaven” (1Pe 1:3).

From “An Exposition of 2nd Corinthians Chapter One” in *The Works of Richard Sibbes*, Vol 3, reprinted by Banner of Truth.

Richard Sibbes (1577-1635): highly regarded early Puritan preacher, who greatly influenced John Cotton, Thomas Goodwin, Richard Baxter, and others. Author of *The Bruised Reed*, *The Soul’s Conflict*, and numerous other works.

ONE SPECIAL DUTY

Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

“At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments”—Psalm 119:62.

DOCTRINE 1: ONE SPECIAL DUTY WHEREIN THE PEOPLE OF GOD SHOULD BE MUCH EXERCISED IS THANKSGIVING. This duty is often pressed upon us: “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually, which is the fruit of our lips” (Heb 13:15), giving thanks unto His name. There are two words there used, *praise* and *thanksgiving*. *Generally* taken, they are the same; *strictly* taken, thanksgiving differeth from praise. They agree that we use our voice in thanksgiving, as we do also in praise, for they are both said to be the fruit of our lips. What is in the prophet Hosea, “calves of our lips” (14:2), is in the Septuagint,[1] “the fruit of our lips.” And they both agree that they are a sacrifice offered to our supreme Benefactor or that they belong to the thank-offerings of the gospel. But they differ in that thanksgiving belongeth to benefits bestowed on ourselves or others; but in relation to us, praise [belongs] to any excellency whatsoever. Thanksgiving may be in word *or* deed; praise in words only.

Well then, thanksgiving is a sensible acknowledgment of favors received or an expression of our sense of them, by word and work, to the praise of the bestower. The object of it is the works of God as beneficial unto us, or to those who are related to us, or in whose good or ill we are concerned, as public persons [or] magistrates: “I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplication, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in

authority” (1Ti 2:1, 2); pastors of the church: “You also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf” (2Co 1:11); or our kindred according to the flesh or some bond of Christian duty: “Rejoice with them that do rejoice” (Rom 12:15).

1. The necessity of being much and often in thanksgiving will appear by these two considerations:

[1.] *Because God is continually beneficial to us, blessing and delivering His people every day and by new mercies giveth us new matter of praise and thanksgiving:* “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah” (Psa 68:19). He hath continually favored us and preserved us and poured His benefits upon us. The mercies of every day make way for songs which may sweeten our rest in the night; and His giving us rest by night and preserving us in our sleep, when we could not help ourselves, giveth us songs in the morning. And all the day long we find new matter of praise: our whole work is divided between receiving and acknowledging.

[2.] *Some mercies are so general and beneficial that they should never be forgotten but remembered before God every day, such as redemption by Christ:* “He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered” (Psa 111:4). We must daily be blessing God for Jesus Christ: “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (2Co 9:15), [which] I understand [to be] of His grace by Christ. We should ever be thus blessing and praising Him; for the keeping of His great works in memory is the foundation of all love and service to God.

2. It is a profitable duty. The usefulness of thanksgiving appeareth with respect to faith, love, and obedience.

[1.] *With respect to faith.* Faith and praise live and die together: if there be faith, there will be praise; and if there be praise, there will be faith. If faith, there will be praise, for faith is a bird that can sing in winter: “In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me” (Psa 56:4); and verse 10, “In God I will praise his word, in the Lord I will praise his word.” His word is satisfaction enough to gracious hearts; if they have His word, they can praise Him beforehand for the grounds of hope before they have enjoyment. As Abraham, when he had not a foot in the land of Canaan, yet built an altar and offered sacrifices of thanksgiving because of God’s grant and the future possession in his posterity (Gen 13:18). Then, whether He punisheth or pitieth, we will praise Him and glory in Him. Faith entertaineth the promise before performance cometh, not only with confidence, but with delight and praise. The other part is, if praise, there will be faith; that is, supposing the praise [is] real; for it raiseth our faith to expect the like again, having received so much grace already. If I have found Him a God hearing prayer, “I will call upon him as long as I live” (Psa 116:2). Praise doth but provide matter of trust, and [it] represents God to us as a storehouse of all good things and a sure foundation for dependence.

[2.] *The great respect it hath to love.* Praise and thanksgiving are acts of love, [which] cherish and feed love. They are acts of love to God; for if we love God, we will praise Him. Prayer is a work of necessity, but praise a mere work of duty and respect to God. We would exalt Him more in our own hearts and in the hearts of others: “I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more” (Psa 71:14). We pray because we need God, and we praise Him because we love Him. Self-love will put us upon prayer, but the love of God upon praise and thanksgiving; then we return to give Him the glory. Those that seek themselves will cry to Him in their distress; but those that love God cannot endure that He should be without His due honor. In heaven, when other graces and duties cease, which belong to this imperfect state, [such as] faith and repentance, yet love remaineth. And because love remaineth, praise remaineth, which is our great employment in the other world. So it feedeth and cherisheth love, for every benefit acknowledged is a new fuel to keep in the fire: “I will love thee, O Lord, my strength” (Psa 18:1); “I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications” (Psa 116:1); “That thou mayest love the Lord, who is thy life, and the length of thy days” (Deu 30:20). The soul by praise is filled with a sense of the mercy and goodness of God, so that hereby He is made more amiable[2] to us.

[3.] *With respect to submission and obedience to His laws and providence.*

(1.) *His laws.* The greatest bond of duty upon the fallen creature is gratitude. Now grateful we cannot be without a sensible and explicit acknowledgment of His goodness to us. The more frequent and serious in that, the more doth our love constrain us to devote ourselves to God: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1). To live to Him: “For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again”

(2Co 5:14, 15). And therefore praise and thanksgiving [are] greater helps to the spiritual life than we are usually aware of; for working in us a sense of God's love and an actual remembrance of His benefits (as it will do if rightly performed), it doth make us shy of sin [and] more careful and solicitous to do His will. Shall we offend so good a God? God's love to us is a love of bounty; our love to God is a love of duty, when we grudge not to live in subjection to Him: "His commandments are not grievous" (1Jo 5:3).

(2.) *Submission to His providence.* There is a querulous^[3] and sour spirit which is natural to us, always repining^[4] and murmuring at God's dealing and wasting and vexing our spirits in heartless complaints. Now this fretting, quarrelling, impatient humor, which often showeth itself against God even in our prayers and supplications, is quelled^[5] by nothing so much as by being frequent in praises and thanksgivings: "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). It is an act of holy prudence in the saints, when they are under any trouble, to strain themselves to the quite contrary duty of what temptations and corruptions would drive them unto. When the temptation is laid to make us murmur and swell^[6] at God's dealings, we should on the contrary bless and give thanks. And therefore the Psalmist doth so frequently sing praises in the saddest condition. There is no perfect defeating the temptation but by studying matter of praise and to set seriously about the duty. So Job 2:10: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Shall we receive so many proofs of the love of God and [yet] quarrel at a few afflictions that come from the same hand and rebel against His providence when He bringeth on some needful trouble for our trial and exercise? As we receive good things cheerfully and contentedly, so must we receive evil things submissively and patiently.

3. It is a most *delightful* work to remember the many thousand mercies God hath bestowed on the church, ourselves, and friends. To remember His gracious word and all the passages of His providence; is this burdensome to us? "Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely" (Psa 147:1); and "Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant" (Psa 135:3). No profit [is] so great as *spiritual*; [it] is not to be measured by the good things of this world or a little pelf^[7] or the great mammon, which so many worship. But spiritual and divine benefit, which tendeth to make us spiritually better, more like God, more capable of communion with Him, *that* is true profit. It is an increase of faith, love, and obedience. So for pleasure and delight—that which truly exhilarateth the soul [and] begets upon us a solid impression of God's love—that *is* the true pleasure. Carnal pleasures are unwholesome for you . . . but this holy delight that resulteth from the serious remembrance of God and setting forth His excellences and benefits is safe and healthful and doth cheer us, but [does] not hurt us.

Means or directions: *Heighten all the mercies you have by all the circumstances necessary to be considered.* [First, consider] the nature and kind of them: spiritual, eternal blessings [come] first. The greatest mercies deserve greatest acknowledgment: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph 1:3)—[i.e.], Christ's Spirit, pardon of sins, heaven, the way of salvation known, accepted, and the things of the world as subordinate helps. "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luk 10:20). Then consider your sense in the [absence] of mercies: what high thoughts had you then of them? The mercies are the same when you have them and when you want^[8] them; only your apprehensions are greater. If affectionately begged, they must be affectionately acknowledged; else you are a hypocrite either in the supplication or gratulation.

Consider the person giving: God—so high and glorious! A small remembrance from a great prince—no way obliged, no way needing me, to whom I can be no way profitable—a small kindness melts us: a gift of a few pounds, a little parcel of land. Do I court him and observe him? There is less reason why God should abase Himself to look upon us or concern Himself in us: "Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!" (Psa 113:6). We have all things from Him.

Consider the person receiving: so unworthy: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant" (Gen 32:10). "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? (2Sa 7:18).

Consider the season: our greatest extremity^[9] is God's opportunity. "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen" (Gen 22:14), when [Abraham's] knife was at the throat of his son. "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust, that he will yet deliver us" (2Co 1:9, 10).

Consider the end and fruit of His mercy: it is to manifest His special love to us and engage our hearts to Himself: “Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption” (Isa 38:17), or “Thou hast loved me from the grave.” Otherwise God may give things in anger.

Consider the means by which He brought them about, when unlikely, weak, insufficient, unexpected in themselves. The greatest matters of providence hang many times upon small wires: a lie brought Joseph into prison, and a dream fetched him out; he was advanced, and Jacob’s family fed. Consider the number of His mercies: “How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!” (Psa 139:17)—the many failings pardoned, comforts received, dangers prevented, deliverances vouchsafed. How He began with us before all time, conducted us in time, and hath been preparing for us a happiness which we shall enjoy when time shall be no more .

From “Sermon LXX” included in *Several Sermons upon Psalm 119* in *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, Vol 7, reprinted by Maranatha Publishers.

Thomas Manton (1620-1677): Non-Conformist Puritan preacher and Oxford graduate who preached until forbidden by the Act of Uniformity of 1662. From 1662 to 1670 he preached in his own house, but was arrested and imprisoned for six months. He later became the preacher for London merchants in Pinners’ Hall. James Ussher called him “one of the best preachers in England.” Born in Lawrence-Lydiat, county of Somerset, England.

- 1 **Septuagint** – a Greek translation of the Old Testament commonly abbreviated as LXX, which derives from its “seventy” translators; completed around the 3rd century BC, it was the Bible of the early church.
- 2 **amiable** – lovely; worthy of love.
- 3 **querulous** – complaining; disposed to murmur.
- 4 **repining** – fretting; complaining discontentedly.
- 5 **quelled** – quieted.
- 6 **swell** – to be bloated with anger; to be exasperated.
- 7 **pelf** – money; riches.
- 8 **want** – lack.
- 9 **extremity** – extreme distress or difficulties.

OF THANKFULNESS TO GOD

John Gill (1697-1771)

Thankfulness follows contentment: a discontented man is not thankful for anything, but a contented man is thankful for everything. Thankfulness is a branch of godliness: none but a godly man is truly a thankful man. There are some things not to be named among saints and are not becoming them; but this is, and rather becoming them than many other things (Eph 5:3, 4). An unthankful saint is a very odd sound, if not a contradiction. “Unthankful, unholy,” are characters joined together and agree (2Ti 3:2) and [likewise] “unthankful” and “evil” (Luk 6:36). And particularly none but an holy man can give thanks “at the remembrance of the holiness of God” (Psa 97:12). Concerning this gracious disposition of mind, thankfulness, may be observed,

I. THE THINGS FOR WHICH THANKS ARE TO BE GIVEN: and they are *all* things. The rule, which is “according to the will of God,” is “giving thanks always for all things.” And again, “In everything,” or for everything, “give thanks” (Eph 5:20; 1Th 5:18) to which agrees what the Apostle says (Phi 4:6). And,

1. First, for temporal mercies. For God is the “Father of mercies,” even of all such mercies, the Author and Giver of them; and therefore thanks should be returned to Him for them. As,

(1) *For our beings.* To *be* is better than *not* to be, and none could give us existence but God, the Fountain of being. “In him we live, and move, and have our being”; that is, we have it from Him, as well as are supported in it by Him. “It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves—be thankful unto him, and bless his name” (Act 17:28; Psa 100:3, 4). The

wonderful formation of man, the structure of his body, the symmetry and perfection of its parts, as well as soundness of limbs, are matter of praise and thankfulness as they were to the Psalmist David (Psa 139:14-16).

(2) *For our life, which is from God.* He “giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Act 17:25). Some creatures have a being and yet not life, as inanimate ones. Some have life, yet only a vegetative one, as plants. And others [have] only an animal one, as brutes. But God has given to man a soul, both living and rational. Adam’s body was made out of the dust of the earth, and then God breathed into him the “breath of life, and man became a living soul.” And such a life every man has, which is a grant and favor from God (Job 10:12); and therefore thanks should be given to Him for it, and for all the mercies of life, and for that more than for them; since “the life is more than meat,” or drink, raiment, and everything by which life is nourished, supported, and made comfortable (Mat 6:25; Job 2:4).

(3) *For the preservation of our being and life by God.* His visitation, which is every day, every morning, preserves our spirits; He upholds our souls in life; He is therefore truly called the “Preserver of men” and is worthy of praise and thanksgiving on that account. The reason given is, not only because He has made the heaven, earth, and seas, and all therein, but because He “preserveth them all” (Neh 9:5, 6).

(4) *For our health, for the continuance of it, and for restoration to it when it has been interrupted.* Health is a very valuable mercy and without which the outward blessings of life cannot be comfortably enjoyed and therefore is greatly to be desired both by ourselves and for our friends. Thus the apostle John wished for Gaius that he might “prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospered” (3Jo 1:2); and persons favored with such a mercy have reason to be thankful as also when it has been lost and restored again. Thus Hezekiah, when recovered from his sickness, said, “The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day” (Isa 38:9, 19). And a contrary behavior, as it very unbecoming, is justly resented as in the case of the ten lepers (Luk 17:15-18).

(5) *For every mercy enjoyed.* Be it what it may, not only for life and health, for food and raiment, which are the principal mercies, but for every other, the least that can be thought of (Gen 32:10). “Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving,” so that it seems the goodness of any creature-mercy to a man depends upon his thankfulness for it. And this is the difference between a thankful and an unthankful man: an unthankful man thinks nothing good, and a thankful man thinks everything good and blesses God for it (2Ti 4:4). And this he does every day; mercies are returned every day and are new every morning. And therefore men sensible of them will say, “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits!” (Psa 68:19).

2. Secondly, for spiritual mercies, whether of a lower or of an higher kind. As,

(1) *First, for the means of grace:* the Gospel and the ministry of it. And a great mercy it is to be under the sound of it: “Blessed is the man that heareth me,” the voice of wisdom, the Gospel of Christ, though only externally (Pro 8:34). It is an happiness to be born in a land where the Gospel is preached and not among Pagans, Mohammedans, and Papists, where there is a “famine”: not a famine for bread nor a thirst for water, but of “hearing the word of the Lord” (Amo 8:11). And a dreadful judgment it is on a people when the Lord commands “the clouds,” the ministers of the word, “that they rain no rain upon them,” that is, preach not the Gospel to them. The Gospel was first restrained to the Jewish people and forbid to be preached to the Gentiles; but afterwards the apostles had a commission to preach it to all nations. The Gentiles embraced it gladly, glorified it, or were greatly thankful for it; and when this is blessed to the conversion of sinners, it is matter of thankfulness, not only to them, but to all true believers and to the ministers of the word. When the Jewish Christians perceived that God had given repentance to the Gentiles also, they glorified God or were thankful to Him and blessed His name. And when the apostles declared the conversion of the Gentiles by the ministry of the word, it caused great joy among the brethren. And when they were successful in all parts, in making conquests of souls to Christ, they could not but express their thankfulness to God, saying, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ” (2Co 2:14).

And when it is food to believers and is sweet to their taste as the honey and the honeycomb, and they esteem it more than their necessary food, then are they truly thankful for it. It is in itself glad tidings and a joyful sound. And when it is experimentally heard and known, it causes praise and thankfulness even among personages of the highest class. “All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth”—the doctrines of the Gospel, so as to understand them, as they will in the latter day glory (Psa 138:4), when the Gospel ministry will be the means of enlarging the interest of Christ, the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea; and when the

kingdoms of this world shall become the Lord's and His Christ's, then the four and twenty elders—the representatives of Gospel churches—will “worship God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned,” by making the Gospel ministry effectual to the enlargement of His kingdom and interest (Rev 11:15-17).

To which may be added, as means of grace, the ordinances of the Gospel, called the goodness and fatness of the house of God, the provisions of Zion, which, when saints are blessed with, and especially when blessed unto them, and made useful and beneficial, they “shout aloud for joy” or are exceeding thankful for them. And with these may be mentioned the ministers of the Gospel, who are the gifts of God to His churches: “And he gave some pastors and teachers.” [He gave them] gifts to qualify them for such offices; and He gives them themselves to His churches to officiate as such among them: “And I will give you pastors” (Eph 4:11; Jer 3:15). These are reckoned among the blessings and privileges of churches and of all true believers: “All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,” and therefore they have reason to be thankful for them, especially when, though their “teachers have been removed into a corner,” yet not so “any more,” but their “eyes see their teachers,” and their ears hear the joyful sound from them.

(2) *Secondly, thanks are to be given particularly for the blessings of grace themselves, the things which are freely given of God.* And in order to thankfulness for these in men, there must be knowledge of them, which is had by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. And there must be an application of them, a view of special interest in them. The Spirit of God must witness to their spirits that they belong unto them. He must take of the things of Christ and show them unto them, which will cause exultation and thankfulness. As particularly,

a. *For electing grace.* This may be known without any special and extraordinary revelation, even from the grace in the effectual calling: “For whom he did predestinate, them he also called”; and the “vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory” are explained of those “whom God has called” (Rom 8:30; 9:23, 24), so that those who are called by grace may comfortably conclude that they are predestinated unto life or are in the Lamb's book of life and are foreordained unto eternal glory. And this may be known, as the apostle observes, from the efficacy of the Gospel on the hearts of men (1Th 1:4,5), and such therefore will call upon themselves and others to praise and thankfulness, saying, “Praise the Lord, for the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure” (Psa 135:3, 4). This is matter of great thankfulness, because

(1.) The choice God has made of men to everlasting life is of grace and not of works, even of free, unmerited grace without any motive to it from them, hence called “the election of grace” (Rom 11:5, 6; 9:11-13). Something similar to this was the national election of the people of Israel, which was not because of their quality or quantity; but because of the Lord's pure love unto them (Deu 7:6-8).

(2.) This choice is an act of distinguishing grace. It is not a choice of all, only of some or it would be no choice. “I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen” (Joh 13:18). All Christ's disciples were chosen to office, but not all to grace and glory; such so chosen are “vessels of mercy” in distinction from others, called “vessels of wrath.” It is a choice of “us” and not others...of us, who are in no wise better than others, as undeserving of the favor of God as others, being “children of wrath” even as others.

(3.) It is a choice, which is the source, foundation, and security both of grace and glory. Sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, which include all grace, are fixed and secured in eternal election and flow from it. Men are chosen to faith and holiness before the foundation of the world, and these are in time bestowed upon them: “As many as were ordained unto eternal life believed.” Hence, true faith is called “the faith of God's elect” being peculiar to them in consequence of their election and with which their eternal happiness is connected. “For whom he did predestinate—they he also glorified.” Now if the apostle thought himself bound to give thanks for the election of others, then much more for his own; and so is every chosen vessel of salvation (see 2Th 2:13).

b. *Thanks are to be given for redeeming grace.* This was one of the benefits and blessings of grace, which lay uppermost on the mind of the Psalmist, when he called upon his soul and all within him to bless the name of the Lord and not forget His benefits. “Who,” says he, “redeemeth thy life from destruction” (Psa 103:1, 2, 4), having in view, no doubt, the redemption of it by Christ from everlasting ruin. Thus Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, began his prophecy, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people,” and raised up a mighty Savior and Redeemer from David's family. This he said, when the “day spring from on high had visited them.” The Savior was

conceived and became incarnate, though as yet not born, who was to be the Redeemer of His people (Luk 1:68, 69, 78), and great reason there is for praise and thankfulness on this account.

(1.) Because this redemption is special and particular. They are a “peculiar people,” whom Christ has redeemed from all iniquity. They are “redeemed from among men,” and so not all men. They are “redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” and not every kindred, every tongue, all people, and each nation; and therefore have the greater reason to be thankful that they are redeemed.

(2.) It is altogether free on their parts. Though they are bought with a price, are redeemed from a vain conversation with the precious blood of Christ, to which redemption is frequently ascribed; yet they are “redeemed without money,” without any price or money of their own paid by them for it. It is wholly of free cost to them. They are “let go, not for price nor reward,” which they have given; their redemption is indeed through the blood of Christ, and yet it is “according to the riches of the grace of God,” Who of His infinite wisdom and grace has found a ransom.

(3.) It is a plenteous one. “With the Lord is plenteous redemption” (Psa 130:7), a redemption from all iniquity, original and actual; from all sins of every kind, of heart, lip, and life, before and after conversion; from Satan, stronger than they, who held them captive; from all the curses of the law, to which they were subject by sin; and from hell and wrath, and from every enemy of their souls.

(4.) It is an eternal one. “Having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb 9:12), which will always continue: the redeemed will never more return to a captive state or be brought into subjection to what they are redeemed from, but will always enjoy the benefits arising from this grace. And if therefore Moses and the children of Israel had reason to sing unto the Lord, Who “in his mercy had redeemed them out of Egypt,” which was but a temporal redemption, much more reason have we to praise the Lord and give thanks to Him for eternal redemption by Christ.

c. Thanks are to be given for pardoning grace and mercy. This is the first thing the Psalmist mentions after stirring up himself to bless and praise the Lord for all His benefits: “who forgiveth all thine iniquities” (Psa 103:1-3). And indeed, pardon of sin is a great blessing, and he is an happy man whose transgression is forgiven and his sin covered, and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity! And there f o re [he] should express his thankfulness for it. And,

(1.) Because it is entirely free with respect to the persons who partake of it. It proceeds, indeed, upon a satisfaction made by another. For God, though He forgives sin, will by no means clear the guilty without a full satisfaction to His justice: “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” But though Christ’s blood has been shed for the remission of sins, yet that is according to the riches of divine grace; it is free to men, though it cost Christ dear, His blood and life (Isa 43:25). Some, their debts are more and others less numerous; one owes five hundred pence and another fifty; but whereas neither the one nor the other “have anything to pay,” God, the Creditor, “frankly forgives them both” (Luk 7:41, 42).

(2.) Pardon of sin is not only free, but full and complete; and therefore, sinful men should be thankful for it. God not only forgives all manner of sin, signified by iniquity, transgression, and sin; greater or lesser sins, such as are more or less aggravated; but all acts of sin committed by His people. God for Christ’s sake forgives all: “Having forgiven all trespasses” (Col 2:13). No one sin is left unforgiven, the Lord’s name be praised!

d. Thanks are to be given for adopting grace. This is one of the spiritual blessings with which the Lord’s people are blessed in Christ “according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph 1:3, 5). There is such a display of grace in the blessing of adoption as ravished the apostle John and caused him to break forth in a rapture and say, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!” (1Jo 3:1). Two things serve to excite thankfulness for this grace:

(1.) That it is bestowed on persons very unworthy, such who are by nature children of wrath as others. And yet by this grace, [they are] children of God. Such of whom God Himself says, “How shall I put them among the children?” and yet of His grace puts them there; such who are like the wretched infant, cast out into the open field in the day it was born, to the loathing of its person, and yet taken into the family of God; who have nothing lovely in them to recommend them, as Moses to Pharaoh’s daughter and Esther to Mordecai had; but all the reverse.

(2.) The various blessings annexed to this grace, such have the glorious liberty of the children of God: liberty of access to God, as children to a father and a right to all privileges and immunities, which fellow citizens with the saints and those of the household of God have. These are never more servants, but heirs, and have a right to the heavenly inheritance.

e. *Thanks are to be given to God for regenerating grace* (1Pe 1:3, 4). This is wholly owing to the free grace and rich mercy of God. It is denied to be of blood or of the will of men or of the will of the flesh, but of God—of His sovereign grace and favor—Who “of his own will, begat us with the word of truth.” And the rather should we be thankful for this grace, since without it there can be no enjoyment of eternal life: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jam 1:18; Joh 1:13; 3:3).

f. *Thanks are to be given as for a right to eternal life*, which lies not in the righteousness of men but in the righteousness of Christ, which is all of grace (Col 1:12).

g. *Thanks are to be given for victory over all spiritual enemies*, and so for persevering grace in faith and holiness to glory, notwithstanding them all. Nothing [is] more distressing than a body of sin and death and nothing more desirable than a deliverance from it, and yet [there can be] no hope of it but through Christ. And having hope of it in this way, such a soul may say with the apostle, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” that is, that there will be a deliverance from it; and not from that only, but from every enemy—sin, law, and death. And therefore [we] can say, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory,” over death and the grave; over sin, the sting of death; and over the law, the strength of sin; so that nothing shall hinder an abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of God (Rom 7:23, 24; 1Co 15:57).

3. Thirdly, for Christ, the great blessing of grace and gift of God: “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (2Co 9:15). The donor of this gift is God, of Whom are all things. Hence, Christ is called the “gift of God” by way of eminence (Joh 4:10), Who is a sovereign Being and disposes of all His gifts—and so this—to whomsoever He pleases. It is His own He gives, and He may do with that what He will; and this is a gift like Himself, suitable to the greatness of His Majesty as King of kings. It is a royal gift, like that “Araunah, as a king, gave unto the king” (2Sa 24:23). The gift is the Son of God: “To us a Son is given,” the only begotten Son of God, His own Son, the dear Son of His love, His Son and Heir. Him He has given to be for a covenant of the people, the Mediator and Surety of it, and with Whom He has entrusted all the blessings and promises of it: to be an Head over all things to the church; to be the Savior of the body, the Church; even to be God’s salvation unto the ends of the earth; for which purpose He has not spared Him, but has delivered Him up into the hands of men, justice, and death; and for which those to and for whom He is given, have reason to be thankful, when besides these things, the nature of the gift is observed. As,

(1) *It is entirely a free gift.* It is one of those things and the chief of them, which are “freely given unto us of God” (1Co 2:12), unmerited and undeserved, wholly of free grace, and flowing from the pure love of God to persons of all the most unworthy (Joh 3:16).

(2) *It is a suitable one.* Nothing could have been given us more suitable to our case and circumstances: “Such an High priest became us,” such a Prophet, such a King, such a Mediator between God and men, such a Redeemer and Savior, such an Advocate and Intercessor, one so full of grace and truth, Who is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, Who is indeed ALL in ALL—all that we want, all that we can desire; for,

(3) *It is a very large and comprehensive gift.* God, with Christ, freely gives us all things; and blesses, with all spiritual blessings in him, the blessings of grace and of glory (Rom 8:32; Eph 1:3). Christ being ours, all things are ours; and therefore, we have reason to be thankful (1Co 3:22, 23).

(4) *It is an unchangeable and irreversible gift.* It comes from the “Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” And not only the Giver, but the gift itself is unchangeable, Who is “Jesus, the same yesterday, today, and for ever,” and is one of the gifts of God which are “without repentance,” to which may be added. It is “unspeakable”: none can say how great it is, what is contained in it, and what the benefits arising from it in time and to eternity.

4. Fourthly, for the Spirit of God and His gifts and graces. The Spirit Himself is the gift of God (Luk 11:13), and a great and glorious gift He is, for which we have reason to be thankful, especially when we consider to what ends and purposes He is given: to be a Comforter of His people, “He shall give you another Comforter” (Joh 14:16); to be a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ and to strengthen the saints with all might in the inward man; and to

be the earnest and pledge of their future glory and happiness (2Co 5:5; Eph 1:14, 17; 3:16). The various graces of the Spirit are gifts and free grace gifts and very valuable ones: faith, which is of the operation of the Spirit, is “not of ourselves, it is the gift of God,” which no man has nor can exercise unless it be given him of God. And all men have it not, and therefore it is distinguishing grace to those who have it and should be thankful for it. A good hope is through grace and is given both by God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ (2Th 2:16); and so love is from grace (1Ti 1:14). These are now “the all things” for which we should be thankful.

II. WHEN, IN WHAT CASES AND CIRCUMSTANCES, AND FOR WHOM THANKS ARE TO BE GIVEN.

1. When: *always*, this is the rule: “giving thanks always for all things,” every day, night and day, constantly, continually, all the days of a man’s life. For there are ever new mercies; they are returning every day and every morning. Hence says the Psalmist, “Every day will I bless thee” (Psa 145:2).

2. In what cases and circumstances, in what state and condition are we to be thankful? In every one, “in everything,” that is, in every state, “give thanks” (1Th 5:18).

(1) *Not in prosperity only*, when we are to be joyful, cheerful, and thankful; and when we are not to attribute our prosperity to ourselves, nor to second causes, but to God and be thankful. Otherwise, we shall only “sacrifice to” our own “net,” and “burn incense” to our own [drag-net] (Hab 1:16).

(2) *But in adversity also*, as Job blessed God or was thankful, when he was stripped of all. And the people of God have reason to be thankful under afflictions, when the Lord puts underneath His everlasting arms, and supports them under them; when He strengthens them on a bed of languishing, and makes their bed in their sickness; when He chooses them in the furnace of affliction and knows their souls in adversity; when He manifests His love and favor; when He is with them passing through the fire and water, so that the one shall not kindle upon them, nor the other overflow them; in short, since He makes all things work together for their good here and hereafter, they should be thankful. And also,

(3) *In times of temptation*, since the temptation might have been suffered to have been greater and heavier than it is; since the grace of God is sufficient to support under it and carry through it and the faithfulness of God will not suffer His people to be tempted above what they are able to bear; and since Christ is able to help them that are tempted, sympathizes with them, and prays for them that their faith fail not.

(4) *When in very uncomfortable frames*. At least better might be wished for, since these might have been worse and have issued in despair or bordering on it; and in the midst of all it should be considered, that though frames are changeable things, Jehovah changes not, Christ is the same always, the covenant of grace is sure, and the gifts and calling of God [are] without repentance. The Lord knows them that are His, and they shall never perish.

(5) *Amidst all the reproaches and persecutions of men*. So the apostles were thankful that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. The apostle Peter says such are happy (1Pe 4:14). And such who are persecuted for righteousness sake are pronounced blessed by Christ and are exhorted to rejoice and be exceeding glad (Mat 5:10-12).

3. For whom: for all men, for kings and all in authority (1Ti 2:1, 2), since these are powers ordained of God and are ministers for the good of men, terrors to evildoers, and a praise to them that do well. If they are good kings and worthy magistrates, [they] are to be honored and obeyed; and thanks [are] to be given for them, which is good and acceptable in the sight of God. We are to be thankful for our relations and friends, and for the continuance of them. Children are the gifts of God to parents, and as such to be owned with gratitude, as they were by Jacob and Joseph (Gen 33:5; 48:9; see Psa 127:3-5). And likewise [thanks are to be offered] for the churches of Christ and all the saints in them; for their prosperity, for their grace and the increase of it; for their faith, both as a doctrine and a grace; and for their love to one another. These are what the apostle expresses his thankfulness for in almost all his epistles. And so for the ministers of the Gospel, saints should be thankful, who are the gifts of God to the churches and are promised as such (Jer 3:15). These are the servants of the most high God, which show unto men the way of salvation, and who are the churches’ servants for Jesus’ sake; faithful stewards in the house of God, to give to everyone their portion of meat in due season; and being thus useful, thanks should be given for them. [And] likewise [thanks] should be [given] for an increase of converts through the ministry of the Word; when there are additions made to churches of such as shall be saved; when the Gospel is succeeded for the gathering in of others to Christ and into His churches besides those who are already gathered (2Co 2:14).

III. TO WHOM ARE THANKS TO BE GIVEN ON THE ABOVE ACCOUNT? To God, of Whom are all things, and to Whom the glory of all belongs; He is the proper and primary object of thanksgiving: “I thank my God, through Jesus Christ, for you all” (Rom 1:8)—God, Father, Son, and Spirit.

1. Thanks are to be given to the Father: “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father” (Eph 5:20). And hence, the same apostle blesses or gives thanks unto Him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for blessing the saints in Him with all spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3); and the Apostle Peter blesses or gives thanks to Him as such for regenerating grace particularly (1Pe 1:3); and He is to be considered in such an act of thanksgiving as Christ’s God and our God, and as Christ’s Father and our Father. For as we are directed to pray to Him saying, “Our Father, which art in heaven,” so we should give thanks to Him as such saying, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2Co 1:3).

2. Thanks are to be given to the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ: and these are sometimes given to Him particularly and alone. “I thank Christ Jesus the Lord,” says the Apostle (1Ti 1:12). and if thanks are to be given Him on such an account as there, then certainly for other favors received from Him, as for His suretyship^[1] engagements, for His assumption of human nature, for suffering and dying in the room and stead of His people, and for many other acts of grace done by Him and blessings of grace received from Him. Besides, it is in the name of Christ and through Him, we are directed to give thanks to God (Eph 5:20; Rom 1:8), as it is proper we should, since all our mercies come to us through Him. It is in Him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings, and it is out of His fullness we receive, and grace for grace. And all the grace that is wrought in us in regeneration and in carrying on the work of sanctification, is all “through Christ.” Nor can we come to God in any other way with our thanksgivings but by Him. He is the only way to the Father, the way of access to Him with boldness and confidence; and therefore by Him we are to “offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks unto his name” (Heb 13:15). Nor are our spiritual sacrifices, either of prayer or praise, acceptable to God, but through Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom our persons are accepted, even in Him the Beloved.

3. Thanks are to be given to the blessed Spirit: for as He is the object of prayer with the Father and the Son, so the object of praise and thanksgiving. And great reason there is, that as we should be careful not to vex and grieve the good Spirit of God with our ingratitude; so that we should be thankful to Him for all that He has done for us in quickening and regenerating us; in beginning and carrying on the good work of grace in us; and in sealing us up to the day of redemption, besides many other acts of grace which might be mentioned. Now this work of thanksgiving is to be performed towards God with a celebration of the divine perfections which are displayed in His acts of kindness to us, as we are to give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness [and] at the remembrance of every other attribute of His. It is in this way the living creatures are said to give glory, and honor, and thanks unto God (Rev 4:8, 9). This is also to be done by a recollection of the benefits of God, bestowed upon us, which though so many that we are not able to reckon them up in order before Him, yet as much as in us lies, we are to call upon our souls to call to mind and not forget, if possible, any of His benefits; and to inquire, what shall we render to Him for them (see Isa 63:7). And this is to be performed with all our hearts, with all that is within us, with all the powers and faculties of our souls, and to the utmost of our abilities. As we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our strength, we are to give thanks to Him in like manner in the most intense way we are capable of. As we are to serve Him with grace in our hearts in every branch of duty, so in this, even in the exercise of every grace.

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1 suretyship – obligation taken by one person on behalf of another.

THANKFULNESS IN ALL THINGS

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord”— Job 1:21.

Learn to bless the Lord’s name in everything: learn to ring the bells of His praise all day long and, for the matter of that, all night long too.

First, bless the name of the Lord when He reveals His hand in giving. “Ah!” you say, “that is an easy thing to do.” So it ought to be, my brethren and sisters in Christ, and it is a neglect of our duty where we do not do it. We come down to our breakfast in the morning, rejoicing in health and strength, and we go out to our day’s engagements; but I hope not without thankfulness that we are in health, and that we have food to eat and raiment to put on. We are out all day and things prosper with us, but I trust that we do not accept all this as a matter of course, but that we praise the Lord for it all the day long. And then, when we go home again at night and God is still with us, I hope we do not fall asleep before we again praise Him. John Bunyan used to say that the very chickens shame us if we are ungrateful, for they do not take a drink of water without lifting up their heads, as if in thankfulness for the refreshing draught. If we, who are the Lord’s children, do not bless Him for the mercies which so constantly come to us from Him, we are of all people the most ungrateful. Oh, for a grateful frame of mind, for I am sure that is a happy frame of mind. [Those] who are determined to murmur and to complain of God’s dealings with them are sure to find plenty of things to complain of; while those who are of a thankful spirit will see reasons and occasions for gratitude in everything that happens. Do you remember a touching story, told some years ago of a poor mother with her two little fatherless children? On a cold winter’s night, they discovered an empty house, into which they went for shelter. There was an old door standing by itself, and the mother took it, placed it across a corner of the room, and told the children to creep behind it so as to get a little protection from the cold wind. One of the children said, “Oh Mother, what will those poor children do, that haven’t got any door to set up to keep out the wind?” That child was grateful even for such a poor shelter as that. Yet there are some, who have thousands of greater blessings than that, and yet do not see God’s hand in them and do not praise Him for them. If that has been the case with any of us, let us turn over a new leaf and ask God to rule it with music lines. And then let us put on them notes of thanksgiving and say to the Lord with David, “Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever” (Psa 145:2).

Praising God is one of the best ways of keeping away murmuring. Praising God is like paying a peppercorn rent[1] for our occupation of our earthly tenement. When the rent is not paid, the owners generally turn the tenants out, and God might well do so with us if He were like earthly landlords. If we are not grateful to Him for all the bounties which we constantly receive from Him, He may make the stream to stop; and then what should we do? Ungrateful mind, beware of this great danger! Thankfulness is one of the easiest virtues for anyone to practice, and certainly it is one of the cheapest; so let all Christians especially comply with the apostolic injunction, “Be ye thankful.” It is a soul-enriching taking to be thankful. I am sure, that a Christian man with gratitude for a small income is really richer than the man who lives a graceless life and is plentifully endowed with worldly wealth. David spoke truly when he said, “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked” (Psa 37:16). So, let others do as they will, we say, “Give us, Lord, whatever thou wilt, whether it be little or much, so long as thou dost give with it the light of thy countenance, our souls shall be abundantly content.” Thus are we to bless the name of the Lord for all that He gives us.

But, it is a much more difficult thing to bless the name of the Lord for what He takes away from us. Yet, difficult as it is, I venture to say that many believers, who have forgotten to praise God while He was giving to them, have not forgotten to praise Him when He was taking away from them. I do not know how thankful Job had been before this trying period in his history, but I do know that his trials brought out this expression of his thankfulness. It is his first recorded praise to God. Some of us need to lie a little while upon a sick-bed in order to make us thankful for having had good health for so long; and we need to be brought low and to have our spirits depressed, in order to make us grateful that we have had such cheerful spirits and been blessed with so many comforts. It is not natural or easy for flesh and blood to praise God for what He takes away; yet this painful experience often wakes up the gratitude of the Christian, and he who forgot to praise the Lord before makes up for it now.

Brethren, praise is God's due when He takes as well as when He gives, for there is as much love in His taking as in His giving. The kindness of God is quite as great when He smites us with His rod as when He kisses us with the kisses of His mouth. If we could see everything as He sees it, we should often perceive that the kindest possible thing He can do to us is that which appears to us to be unkind. A child came home from the common[2] with her lap full of brightly shining berries. She seemed very pleased with what she had found, but her father looked frightened when he saw what she had got and anxiously asked her, "Have you eaten any of those berries?" "No, Father," replied the child to his great relief. And then he said to her, "Come with me into the garden"; and there he dug a hole, put the berries in, stamped on them and crushed them, and then covered them with earth. All this while, the little one thought, "How unkind Father is to take away these things which pleased me so much!" But she understood the reason for it, when he told her that the berries were so poisonous that if she had eaten even *one* of them, she would in all probability have died in consequence. In like manner sometimes, our comforts turn to poison, especially when we begin to make idols of them. And it is kind on the part of God to stamp on them and put them right away from us, so that no mischief may come to our souls. Surely that child said, "Thank you, Father, for what you have done; it was love that made you do it." And you also, believer, can say, "Thank God for my sickness, for my poverty, for that dead child of mine, for my widowhood, for my orphanhood—thank God for it all. It would have been ruinous to me to have left me unchastened. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word" (Psa 119:67). Blessed be His name for all that He has done, both in giving and in taking away.

It is a grand thing when we do not judge God's dealings with us simply by the rules of reason. From the first moment when the love of God is revealed to us, right on to the hour when we shall be in the presence of the Father in glory, we may depend upon it that there is infinite love in every act of God in taking from us, just as much as in giving to us. Jesus said to His disciples, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." The Father always loved Jesus with infinite love—He loved Him as much when He was on the cross as He did when He was on His throne. And in like manner, Jesus always loves us with an unchanging love—a love which can never fail us. He loves us as much in the furnace of affliction as He will love us when we shall be with Him in glory. So let us bless His name, whether He gives or takes away. I invite every mourning soul here to bless God's name at this moment.

"Ah!" says one, "I wish I could get a little more happiness to sustain me under my many trials." Well, let me just remind you of the poor widow woman who went out to gather a few sticks to make a fire, that she might bake some cakes for herself and her son. When the prophet Elijah met her, what did he say to her? He told her to make him a little cake first, and afterwards he added, "Make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah" (1Ki 17:13b-16). Notice that he said to the woman, "Make me a little cake first." And God seems to say to you, "Praise Me first, and then I will bless you." Say, as Job did a little later in his history, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). I believe it marks the turn of the tide, with a saint, when he can say to the Lord, with good old John Ryland,[3] "Thee, at all times, will I bless; Having thee, I all possess." The sky soon begins to clear when the Christian begins to say, "The Lord's will be done—not as I will, but as thou wilt." This is a sign that the chastisement has had its due effect: the rod will probably be put away now. Ye mourning souls, take down your harps from the willows and sound forth at least a note or two to the praise of the Lord your God. Praise Him with such notes as these: "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart . . . [I will not fret myself] because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass (Psa 73:1; 37:7) . . . O my God, I believe that all things are working together for my good, and that thou art my gracious Heavenly Father, full of compassion and overflowing with love." If you talk like this, Christian, and mean what you say, it will be a blessing to yourself, a comfort to others, and an honor to your God. As I speak thus, I am reminded that these comforting truths belong only to true believers. And as I send you away, I dare not put the words of my text into all your mouths, for, alas! Some of you cannot see our Father's hand in anything that happens to you. You are without a parent, except that wicked one of whom Christ said to the Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (Joh 8:44). Yet remember, you who cannot claim God as your Father, that the door of His grace is not yet shut. He is still willing to receive you; if you will come to Him, confessing your sins, and seeking mercy through the precious blood of Jesus, He is both able and willing to give you a new heart and a right spirit, to save you here and now, and to adopt you at once into His family. Then will you also be able to see His hand both in giving and in taking away, and you also will learn to bless His name at all times. If God the Lord shall deal thus graciously with you, His shall be thy praise for ever and ever. Amen.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential Baptist minister in England. The collected sermons of Spurgeon during his ministry fill 63 volumes. The sermons' 20–25 million words are equivalent to the 27 volumes of the ninth edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica and stand as the largest set of books by a single author in the history of Christianity. Born at Kelvedon, Essex.

1 **peppercorn rent** – peppercorn is the dried berry of black pepper. Formerly used as a nominal rent; therefore, something of extremely small, insignificant value.

2 **common** – undivided land belonging to the members of a local community, often a patch of unenclosed or “waste” land.

3 **John Ryland** (1753-1825) – the most eminent Baptist preacher for nearly 30 years in the west of England and president of the Baptist college in Bristol.

THANKSGIVING FOR MERCIES RECEIVED

John Flavel (c. 1630-1691)

“They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand”—Deuteronomy 33:19.

Doctrine: That it is the special duty of seamen, when God returns them to their habitations in peace, thankfully to acknowledge and bless His name, for all the preservations and mercies they have received from His hand. These are mercies indeed which are obtained from God by prayer, and returned to Him again by praise. When we have received our mercies God expects His praises. After the Psalmist had opened the hazards and fears of seamen upon the stormy ocean, and the goodness of God in bringing them to their desired haven (Psa 107:30), He presently calls upon them for this duty, “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” (107:31) O that men would! Why, how is it imaginable they should not? He hath the heart of a beast, not of a man, that would not. Did I say the heart of a beast? Give me that word again. There is a kind of gratitude even in beasts to their benefactors: “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib” (Isa 1:3).

1. The nature of the duty needs opening, for few understand what it is. Alas! It is another manner of thing than a customary, formal, cold “God be thanked.” Now if we search into the nature of this duty, we shall find that whoever undertakes this angelic work must,

First, be a heedful observer of the mercies he receives. This is fundamental to the duty. Where no observations of mercies have been made, no praises for them can be returned. God was never honored by His unobserved mercies. When David had opened the providences of God to the several degrees and orders of men in various administrations and called upon them distinctly to praise God for them, he adds in the close of all, “Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD” (Psa 107:43). It is God’s charge against Israel, “She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver” (Hos 2:8), i. e., she did not observe and take notice of these mercies as coming from My hand, but only looked at the next cause. Thus it is with many; they think not upon their own mercies. Others can observe them, but they cannot; they can quickly observe what troubles befall them, but take little notice of their own mercies. Such men can never be thankful.

Secondly, the thankful man must not only observe what mercies he hath and from whom they come; but must particularly consider them in their natures, degrees, seasons, and manner of conveyance. There is much of God’s glory and our comfort lost for want of this. “The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein” (Psa 111:2). And indeed, there is no employment in all the world that yields more pleasure to a gracious soul, than the anatomizing[1] of providence doth. How sweet is it to observe the mutual respects, coincidences, and introductive occasions of our mercies; every minute circumstance hath its weight and value here. He hath little pleasure in his meat that swallows it whole without chewing.

Thirdly, the thankful person must duly estimate and value his mercies. It is impossible that man can be thankful for mercies he little esteems. Israel could not praise God for that angels' food with which He fed them, whilst they despised it in saying, "But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes" (Num 11:6). And surely it shows the great corruption of our nature, that those things which should raise the value of mercies with us cause us the more to slight them: yet thus it falls out. The commonness or long-continuance of mercies with us, which should endear them the more and every day increase our obligation to God, causes them to seem but cheap and small things. And therefore doth God so often threaten them, yea, and remove them, that their worth and excellency may thereby be acknowledged.

Fourthly, the thankful person must faithfully record His mercies; else God cannot have His due praise for them. "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Psa 103:2). Forgotten mercies bear no fruit: a bad memory in this case makes a barren heart and life. I confess the mercies of God are such a multitude, that a memory of brass cannot retain them. "But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy," saith David (Psa 5:7). They are called "showers of blessings" (Eze 34:26). And as it is impossible to recount all our mercies, [so it is impossible] to number the drops of rain that fall in a shower! Nevertheless, it hath been the pious care and endeavor of the people of God to preserve and perpetuate His mercies by using all the helps to memory they could. Therefore, they have kept registers^[2] (Exo 17:14); endited^[3] Psalms, to bring to remembrance, [as the title of] Psalm 70; denominated places from the mercies received there. Thus Jacob called the place where he found so much mercy, Bethel. Hagar named the well, where God unexpectedly relieved her, Beer-lahai-roi, the well of Him that liveth and looketh upon me (Gen 16:13, 14).

They have stamped the mercies upon the days in which they received them. Thus the Jews called those days in which God wrought their deliverance, Purim, after the name Pur, signifying the lot Haman had cast for their lives (Est 9:26). Yea, they have called their mercies upon their children (1Sa 1:20). Thus thankful souls have striven to recognize their mercies, that God might not lose the praise or themselves the comfort of them.

Fifthly, the thankful person must be suitably affected with the mercies he receives. It is not a speculative,^[4] but an affectionate remembrance that becomes us. Then God hath His glory, when the sense of His mercies melts our hearts into holy joy, love, and admiration. Thus David sits down before the Lord like a man astonished at His goodness to Him: "And what can David say more? for thou Lord knowest thy servant" (2Sa 7:20). The mercies of God have made the saints' hearts leap for joy within them: "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy works; therefore will I triumph in the works of thy hands" (Psa 92:4). Mercies are not mercies, deliverances are not deliverances to us, if we that receive them are not glad of them.

Sixthly, the thankful person must order his conversation^[5] suitably to the engagements that his mercies have put him under. When we have said all, it is the life of the thankful, that is the very life of thankfulness. Obedience and service are the only real manifestations of gratitude. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God" (Psa 50:23). Set down this for an everlasting truth, that God was never praised and honored by an abused mercy. God took it ill from Hezekiah: "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem" (2Ch 32:25). He that is truly thankful will say as David, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" (Psa 116:12). We then glorify God with His mercies when we employ them to right ends, when we thankfully take our own share of comfort from them, receiving them with thanksgiving as from the hand of a father. Mr. Swinnock^[6] tells of a young man, who lying upon his sick-bed, was always calling for meat.^[7] But as soon as it was brought him, he shook and trembled dreadfully at the sight of it, and so continued till it was taken away; and before his death [he] acknowledged God's justice, [because] in his health he ordinarily received his meat without thanksgiving.

Use all God's mercies with thankfulness; God will remember them in fury, who forget Him in His favors.

And think not what God bestows upon you is wholly for your own use; but honor God with your mercies by clothing the naked and feeding the hungry, especially such as are godly. This is a due improvement of your estates. Thus you may make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness (Luk 16:1-9). Ah, how little do we consider what praise, what glory we may occasion from others this way to the name of God! Thus honor the Lord with your substance; look upon all you have as your Master's talents, for which you must give an account: use and employ them for God that you

may give up your account with joy. Then you will show yourselves thankful indeed. Thus you see what is included in real thankfulness. O, it is another matter than we take it to be.

From “The Seaman’s Return,” a sermon originally included in *The Seaman’s Companion: Wherein the Mysteries of Providence, relation to Seamen, are opened; their Sins and Dangers discovered; their Duties pressed, and their several Troubles and Burdens relieved in The Works of John Flavel, Vol 5,* reprinted by Banner of Truth.

John Flavel (c. 1630-1691): English Presbyterian and minister at Dartmouth, Devonshire, England. Voluminous writer of Evangelical works such as *The Fountain of Life Opened* and *Keeping the Heart*. His vivid word pictures resulted in memorable, lifechanging sermons. One of his hearers said “that person must have a very soft head, or a very hard heart, or both, that could sit under his ministry unaffected.” Born at Bromagrove, Worcester, England.

1 **anatomizing** – dissecting something into its individual parts for the purpose of examination.

2 **registers** – a book or volume in which regular entry is made of events or details of any kind which are considered of sufficient importance to be exactly and formally recorded.

3 **endited** – put into words; composed.

4 **speculative** – hypothetical reasoning; theory.

5 **conversation** – manner of conducting one’s self; behavior.

6 **George Swinnock** (1627-1673) – Oxford and Cambridge graduate and Puritan preacher ejected from his pulpit for non-conformity in 1662. Born in Maidstone, England.

7 **meat** – food in general; anything eaten for nourishment.

A SIN FOR WHICH THERE IS NO EXCUSE

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“So that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful”—Romans 1:20, 21.

Now we come to consider the second sin. May the word which I may have to say about it, be blessed to many of my hearers by the power of the Holy Spirit! Have you ever thought of it in this light before—that men were without excuse because when they knew God they were not thankful? *Unthankfulness is a sin for which there is no excuse if it be attended with knowledge.* I fear there are thousands who call themselves Christians, who are not thankful, and yet they never thought themselves very guilty on that account. Yet you see these sinners were without excuse, because they were guilty of a great sin before God, and that sin was unthankfulness. I tremble both for myself and you when I see want of thankfulness thus set in the front rank of sins. How is it that we may be unthankful?

I answer, first, there is in some a want of gratitude for mercies possessed. They receive many blessings without making a note of them or even seeming to know that they have them. Their daily mercies seem to come in always at the back door, where the servants take them in, and never tell their master or mistress that they have arrived. They never receive their mercies at the front door with grateful acknowledgments; but they still continue dumb debtors, daily owing more, but making no attempt at a return. The Lord continues to bless them in things temporal, to keep them in health and strength, aye, and to give them the means of grace and spiritual opportunities. And they live as if these things were so commonplace that they were not worth thanking God for. Many professors are of that kind—recipients of countless mercies, but destitute of such common thankfulness as even beasts might manifest. From them God hears no song of gratitude, no chirp of praise, though birds would charm the woodlands with their minstrelsy:[1] these are worse than the dumb driven cattle, or the fishes in the brook, which do at least leap up and mean their Maker’s praise.

Some show this unthankfulness in another way, for they always dwell most on what they have not got. They have manna, and that is angels’ food; but then they have no fish, and this is a ready theme for grumbling. They talk very loudly of “the fish we did eat in Egypt,” and lament those ample feasts provided by the muddy Nile. Moreover, they have none of those delightful vegetables—the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions. They have none of these rank[2] luxuries, and therefore again they murmur and call the manna “light bread.” They put this complaint over and over again to Moses, till

Moses must have been sick of them and their garlic. They said that they could not get leeks, and cucumbers, and onions, and that they were therefore most hardly done by, and would not much longer put up with it. Thankless rebels! And have I not known some of God's servants say that they enjoy much of the presence of their Lord, but they have no riches; and so they are not among the favored ones. Over their poverty they fetch a deep groan. Some live in the presence of God, so they tell us, and they are full of divine delights, but yet they are greatly afflicted with aches and pains, and all the dolours^[3] of rheumatism, and therefore they murmur. I admit that rheumatism is a dreadful pain enough, but at the same time to dwell always on the dark side of things, and to forget our mercies, is a sad instance of ingratitude. We are few of us as thankful as we ought to be; and there are some people who are not thankful at all, for instead of a song concerning their mercies, their life is one long dirge^[4] for their miseries. Must we always hear the sackbut?^[5] Is the harp never to give forth a joy-note?

Some show their unthankfulness by fretting under their supposed ills. They know from Scripture that even their afflictions are working for their good, yet they do not rejoice in the prospect, or feel any gratitude for the refining process through which the Lord is passing them. Heaven and perfection are left unsung, but the present processes are groaned over without ceasing. Their monotonous note is always this pain, this loss, this burden, this uncomfortable sensation, this persecution from the world, this unkindness from the saints, and so on; all this goes to show that, though they know God, they do not glorify Him as God, neither are they thankful.

We can be guilty of unthankfulness, also, by never testifying to the goodness of God. A great many people come in and out of your houses; do you ever tell them about God's goodness to you? Did you ever take up a single ten minutes with the tale of the Lord's lovingkindness to you? Oh, what backwardness there is to testify to God as God and to all His goodness and love! Our mouths are full of anything rather than the goodness of the Lord. Shame on our wicked lips!

Some fail also in their singing of God's praises. I love to be singing in my heart, if I may not sing with my tongue. Is it not a good thing for you housewives, when you are about the house, to sing over everything? I remember a servant that used to sing at the washtub, and sing in the kitchen; and when someone asked her why she was always singing, she said that if it did not do anything else it kept bad thoughts out of her mind. There is a great deal in that; for bad thoughts are bad tenants, who pay no rent and foul the house. I knew a dear old Methodist preacher, who is now in heaven, who when he came downstairs of a morning was always tooting a bit of a hymn over, and he did the same in the barn and the field. I have passed him in the street and noted his happy melody: indeed he was always singing. He never took much notice of anybody, so as to be afraid of being overheard. Whether people heard him or not did not make much difference to him.

He was singing to the Lord, not to them; and so he wells^[6] on singing. I do not think that he had much of a voice or an ear for music, but his soul was made up of praise, and that is better than a musical education. God does not criticize our voice, but He accepts our heart. Oh, to be singing the praises of God every minute of our lives and never ceasing therefrom! Do you not think that many fail in this respect? They are not preparing for heaven, where all is praise; or they would take up the joyful employment at once.

It is plain that many are not thankful to God, for they never praise Him with their substance. Yet when the Jew was thankful, he took care to give a portion to the house of the Lord: before he would eat of his corn, he would send his sheaf to the sanctuary. If we are grateful to God, we shall feel that the first thing to do is to give of our substance an offering of thanksgiving to the Most High. But this does not strike some people, whose religion is so spiritual that they cannot endure to hear of money, and they faint at the sound of a collection. Their thankfulness rises to singing a hymn occasionally, but it never goes as far as giving a button to the cause of God. I am afraid their thankfulness is not worth more than what they pay to express it: that is to say, nothing at all. God deliver us from such a state of heart as that, and may we never, in any of these senses, be found amongst those professors, of whom it is said that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankful.

They knew God, but they glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankful. And the first result of it was that *they fell into vain imaginings*. If we do not glorify God, the true God, we shall soon be found setting up another god. This vain-imagination business is being done quite as extensively now as in Paul's days. Depart from the inspiration of the Bible, and from the infallibility of the Spirit of God who wrote it, and where will you go? Well, I cannot tell where you will go. One wanders into one vain imagination, and one into another, till the dreamers are on all sides. I expect to see a new doctrine every day of the week now. Our thinkers have introduced an age of inventions, wherein everything is thought of

but the truth of God. We do not want these novelties. We are satisfied with the word of God as we find it. But if you do not glorify God as God, and are not thankful to Him for His teaching, then away you go into vain imaginations.

And what next? Well, *away goes the mind of man into all sorts of sins*. The chapter describes unnatural lusts and horribly fierce passions. Men that are not satisfied and thankful—men that have no fear of God before their eyes—it were a shame for us to think, much more to speak, of what they will do. A heart that cannot feed at God’s table will riot somewhere. He that is not satisfied with the cup that God has filled will soon be a partaker of the cup of devils. An unthankful spirit is, at bottom, an atheistic spirit. If God were God to us, we should not be unthankful to Him. If God were glorified in our hearts, and we were thankful for everything that He did, we should walk in holiness and live in submission. And if we do not thus behave ourselves, the tendency will be for us to go from bad to worse, and from worse to the very worst. This has been done on a large scale by nations, whose downward course of crime began with want of thankfulness to God. It is done on a smaller scale by individuals, to whom departure from God is the beginning of a vicious career. Get away from God, and where have you gone? If you do not love Him and delight in Him, whither will you stray? May the Lord tether us fast to Himself and even nail us to the cross.

It seems that these people, of whom Paul wrote, fell into all kinds of bitterness, such as envy, murder, deceit, malignity, whispering, backbiting, hating of God. They became spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, and so forth. Well, if your spirit is not sweetened by the adoration and the love of God, it will grow bitter. If love does not reign, hate will rule. Look at unthankful people. Hear them talk. Nobody’s character is safe. There is no neighbor whom they will not slander. There is no Christian man whom they will not misrepresent. The very angels of God would not be safe from suspicion if they lived near to people of that kind. But when you glorify God as God and are thankful for everything—when you can take up a bit of bread and a cup of cold water, and say with the poor Puritan, “What, all this, and Christ too?”—then are you happy, and you make others happy. A godly preacher, finding that all that there was for dinner was a potato and a herring, thanked God that He had ransacked sea and land to find food for His children. Such a sweet spirit breeds love to everybody, and makes a man go through the world cheerfully. If you give way to the other order of feeling and do not glorify God, but quarrel with Him and have no thankfulness for His mercies, then you will suck in the spirit of the devil, and you will get into Satan’s mind and be of his temper and by-and-by his works you will do. Oh, brothers and sisters, dread unthankfulness! Perhaps you did not think that it was so bad, but it is horrible! God help you to escape from it!

From sermon #1763, delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

1 **minstrelsy** – the art, occupation, or practice of playing an instrument or singing.

2 **rank** – strong scented.

3 **dolors** – physical sufferings; pain; grief.

4 **dirge** – a song sung at a burial.

5 **sackbut** – some scholars believe the sackbut was the seven-stringed lyre used in Babylon. Spurgeon associates it with sorrow and grief.

6 **wells** – pours forth.

HOW CAN WE GIVE THANKS IN EVERYTHING?

William Cooper (fl. 1653)

“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”—1 Thessalonians 5:18.

QUERY: WHY AND HOW WE DO GIVE THANKS IN AND FOR AFFLICTIONS?

Answer 1: We must give thanks for good: afflictions are not evil, but good—David tells you so: (Psa 119:67, 68, 71), which every child of God also finds. To this agrees that of the Schools,[1] that crosses are not evil, but good: 1. because inflicted by the Lord, who is the Chief Good; 2. because suffered by the Lord Jesus, who is the Chief Good; 3. they

conform us to the Lord, who is the Chief Good; [and] 4. they prepare us for communion with the Lord in heaven, which is our chief good. Therefore, be thankful for crosses.

Answer 2: *We must thank God for every token of His fatherly love.* But now crosses and troubles are such fatherly love-tokens. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb 12:6). Therefore, give thanks for them, as well for the rod as for bread. “This is thankworthy.” This is acceptable to God. God will thank us for suffering patiently; therefore we must thank Him for inflicting it as a tender Father on beloved sons (1Pe 2:19, 20). Would you be counted bastards? Alexander cashiered[2] one of his name that would not fight; the eagle is said to cast off those young ones that cannot bear the sight of the sun; and some Germans counted such children spurious brats that could not swim: so our heavenly Father will never own them for His children that will not submit to His rod and kiss it too. “Lord, when thou strokest, and when thou strikest, thou art alike a Father,” saith St. Austin.[3]

Answer 3: *The Lord by afflicting His people doth prevent sin and purge it*—therefore, give thanks for it, for this is good because it frees us from the greatest evil: 1. *He prevents sin by it*—“Lest,” saith Paul, “I should be exalted above measure, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me” (2Co 12:7). 2. *He purgeth sin by it*—“By this,” saith the prophet, “shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged” (Isa 27:9).

Now, do we not thank and pay the surgeon that lets out our bad blood, that lanceth our festered sores, that cuts out our proud and rotten flesh? Yes, surely, we do thank him. Do we not also thank the physician that keeps us to a strict diet, confines us to our chamber, gives us bitter pills and potions, and crosses our appetites? Yes, we do thank him. For hereby he cures a disease, defends and preserves both our health and life. Now, what else, I beseech you, doth the Lord do, more or less, by all that we suffer at His hands? And doth not He deserve our thanks, as well as the physician and surgeon?

“Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell” (Pro 23:13, 14). O blessed rod that can do this! God’s rod doth it surely. “Then it is better to go to God’s house of correction, than to the place of torment.” Happy children, then, who have the Lord for their Father and for their Physician! This He takes for one of His eminent titles, “The Lord thy Physician” (Exo 15:26). He doth it skillfully, easily, safely, quickly, thoroughly, according to all the properties of the best artists. Therefore, thank Him.

Answer 4: *We must thank the Lord for afflicting us and for laying the cross upon us because it is so far below what we deserve at His hands*—what is a drop of wormwood[4] sweetened to the gall of bitterness? To the lake of fire and brimstone? Hear what Zophar tells Job: “O that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; and that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth” (Job 11:5, 6). The like saith holy Ezra. And then surely *we* have much more cause to say so; and is not this ground of thankfulness? “If thou suffer a thousand evils, thou wilt never suffer what thou meritest,” saith that Father.

Jesus Christ drank off the dreggy[5] part of the cup for us. We do but as it were sip for fashion that we may seem to pledge; for to drink as He drank it we cannot, we need not (Mat 20:22). Thank God then, that thou hast so little a share of it, when all was thy portion by right and justice. This is thankworthy.

Answer 5: *We must give thanks in everything, even in and for afflictions, under the rod and cross because thereby the Lord doth discipline us and [teach] us much which else we never would have learned*—by this David learned God’s commandments, and they became dearer to him “than thousands of gold and silver” (Psa 119:71, 72). By this the Lord “opens the ear to discipline,” saith Elihu, even when men are “bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he showeth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity” (Job 36:8-10). For as wax, unless it be heated and softened, takes no impression of the seal; so no man, unless exercised with much affliction, will receive the prints of divine wisdom.

Paideia, the word commonly used by the Holy Ghost in the New Testament for “chastise” signifies properly “to teach a child as a schoolmaster or father, with a rod” (Heb 12:5-12; Luk 23:22). This is God’s way of teaching, and the best scholars in Christ’s college have come by their learning this way. “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth” (Lam 3:27). I am sure this is the choicest saints’ academy.

Answer 6: Give thanks in and for afflictions because hereby the Lord fits us for heavenly glory—saints are called “vessels of mercy, prepared unto glory” (Rom 9:23). But how do men make and prepare vessels? If it be a vessel of earth, the potter beats the clay to make it well-tempered, then he molds it on the wheel, then he bakes it in the oven, and then it is fit for use. If it be a vessel of wood, it hath many a turn and many a cut before it is fit. If it be a vessel of gold or silver, it hath both heats and knocks before it be complete. So must every vessel of mercy be served before it be fit for glory.

“We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22). Thus the Apostle Peter tells us also “that the trial of our faith, being much more precious than of gold,” will be “found unto the praise and honor and glory” of God (1Pe 1:7). For the cross is the whetstone of faith, and all other grace sets an edge and luster upon it. It is the awakening of the northwind and south-wind to make these spices flow (Song 4:16). The stone that is most hewed, cut, carved, and polished is usually set in the chiefest part of the building. So are suffering saints prepared for the highest degrees of glory.

Those only that were beheaded or slain “for the witness of Jesus,” reigned with Christ a thousand years (Rev 20:4). So that it may be said of the Lord’s sufferers, as David speaks: “Though ye have lien[6] among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold” (Psa 58:13). This may be truly said, when the Lord shall “change our vile bodies, and fashion them like to his glorious body.” Therefore give thanks in and for thy afflictions.

Answer 7: It is a very high privilege for a Christian to be conformed to Christ—to be conformists to Christ is to be nonconformists to the world (Rom 12:2). But now, what doth more conform us unto Christ than the cross? Therefore give thanks for it. “That I may know the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Phi 3:11). This is part of that excellent knowledge for which he accounted all other worldly privileges but dung. To this conformity in afflictions unto Christ we are predestinated (Rom 8:29). This privilege appears in verse 17: “If we suffer with him, we shall be glorified together.” This way Christ entered into glory: “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” (Luk 24:26). Now if we will enter with Him, we must follow after Him. How? By taking up His cross. Christ, like a good physician, first tasted the medicine that He gave His patient. The cross of Christ sweetens our sufferings in the bitterness of them; as that piece of wood sweetened the waters of Marah, being cast into them. Therefore, John wrote to the saints as partakers together of a great privilege, when he said, “Companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:9). Then never hope to go another way than the Captain of our salvation hath led us; for if we balk⁷ His track, we are lost. Must we not then give thanks for affliction that conforms us to our Head?

Answer 8: The cross is a Christian’s banner, his honor, and the special favor of the Lord towards him—therefore be thankful for it. Let not this seem a riddle or paradox. “I have you,” saith the Apostle, “in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace” (Phi 1:7). Hence, he saith again a little after, “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Phi 1:29). This he accounts a peculiar gift of God to them, whereof but few in comparison do partake. Hence saith one upon that place, “It is a most noble, yea, and almost divine, thing to suffer for the Lord Jesus.” For the Lord gave Christ Himself on this very account, “a name which is above every name” (Phi 2:9). Mark what the apostle Peter saith: “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you” (1Pe 4:14). Which words must be understood emphatically [as] the highest manifestation and operation of the Spirit of God. God’s Spirit manifesteth itself variously in several subjects; but in sufferers for Christ, the very spirit and quintessence[8] of glory seems to be extracted and poured on them.

Upon all these accounts and many more such, we are to thank God for crosses and corrections, because the good of them doth flow from God’s goodness, not from their nature. When the horse-leech, by the physician’s direction, sucks our blood, and thereby performs a cure, the horse-leech is not to be thanked, but the physician for his application. So the Lord can make the bloody persecutors of His people to be instruments of good to His people: no thanks to them, but to Him for it.

QUERY: HOW SHALL A CHRISTIAN BRING HIS HEART TO THIS HOLY AND HEAVENLY FRAME, SO AS IN EVERY THING TO GIVE THANKS?

Answer: Harken to these few directions, lay them up in your hearts, and draw them out in your constant practice.

1. Pray earnestly for the Spirit of God—without that Spirit thou canst never pray or praise God duly[9] because not spiritually. None can sanctify the Lord God in his heart (which is the first principle of this work), but he whose heart the Lord God hath sanctified. The Holy Spirit breathing in a man makes him a living organ, tuned to and sounding out His praise. “Praise is comely[10] for the upright” (Psa 33:1), but as uncomely in a carnal mouth as a jewel in a swine’s snout. The pompous dresses and melodious choirs of *Magnificats*[11] without the Spirit of God breathing among them are but as “a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.” For indeed, without the Spirit of God in men, they neither can nor will remember the Lord’s mercies, nor consider them, nor value them, nor be affected with them, nor blaze the praise of them. “The dead,” saith David, “praise not the LORD” (Psa 115:17). Dead hearts produce dead works: it is the Spirit that quickens.

2. Labor to get a continual quick sight and sense of sin—this will make thee sensible of every mercy and thankful for it. So the provocation and merit of sin is nothing but curses, death, and wrath being due to it. That yet thou shouldst be so tenderly spared and instead of miseries shouldst enjoy blessings! How shouldst thou be affected with this, as Mephibosheth was with David’s kindness to him! A humble, broken heart is the most thankful heart. This was most eminent in the most eminent saints: Jacob (Gen 32:10), David (in the Psalms), Paul, etc. (1Ti 1:12-17). He that knows he hath forfeited all knows he deserves nothing but the reward of that forfeiture, which is wrath. And he that deserves nothing thanks God for everything, even for the least drop and crumb.

Behold every mercy coming to thee in the stream of Christ’s blood and through the covenant of grace—this gives the mercy both an estimate and a relish. This doth both sanctify it, and sweeten it, and sublimate[12] it. A crust of brown bread coming thus is better than a purse full of gold another way, as that king’s kiss to one friend was said to be better gold than a cup of gold which he gave another friend. “He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name” (Psa 111:9). The deliverance *there* was, in David’s account and that truly, the more thankworthy, as being upon a covenant-account. For thus every mercy is a token of the Lord’s favor to his favorite: it is that which makes common mercies to become special mercies.

3. Look on thy mercies as answers to thy prayers and bless the Lord for them on that account—for that is double mercy: (1) that God hath inclined and directed thine heart to beg such a mercy; this is a special act of the Spirit of adoption (Rom 8:26, 27); (2) that He hath answered such prayers; for this is a sign [that] He accepts thee in Christ. Many blessings come unasked for and unlooked for, yet these require thankfulness.

But when the Lord is inquired of for the things we have and doth grant them to us, this is a blessing upon His own institution and a seal to His promise. Hear David: “Come and hear,” saith he, “and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue” (Psa 66:16, 17), as if he had said, “This was a signal favor for the Lord to grant what I petitioned Him for and therefore deserves a special acknowledgment.” For this, Hannah calls her son, Samuel, that is, “asked of God” (1Sa 1:20); and Leah calleth her second son, Simeon, that is, “hearing,” because God heard her prayer for him (Gen 29:33). And Rachel called her son, Naphtali, that is, “wrestling,” because she wrestled for him (Gen 30:8). Now as Samuels should be Lemuels, that is, “dedicated to God,” so all our mercies we get by prayer should be the more solemnly dedicated to the Lord by thanksgiving. And such a frame of a thankful heart is a spiritual frame.

4. When any of God’s dealings do either draw us or drive us nearer to God, this is a special mercy—when we consider that well, we cannot but be greatly affected with it and will be accordingly thankful for the mercy; for the dispensation is thereby the more merciful. Mercies are drawing-cords; afflictions are whip-cords to drive us. By both we are brought nearer to God: thank Him. If the chief Shepherd hunts us together, keeps us from straggling, and brings us under command, this is a mercy to Christ’s sheep. If the Lord “hedge up our way with thorns,” that we cannot find our lovers, this is a mercy. And if the Lord recovers His mercies from us, that in the want of them we may know He was the Founder and Fountain of them, [then] this is a mercy (Hos 2:6-9). That storm that sinks and splits some ships, drives others faster into the haven: so do the troubles of this world make a true Christian’s voyage towards Heaven the speedier.

5. That soul that is truly and spiritually thankful will so order his whole conversation[13] that God may have the glory of it—the Psalmist, who was well skilled in this art, seems to point at this often. “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God” (Psa 50:23). We cannot better glorify God than by a well-ordered conversation. This is in everything to give thanks indeed. So likewise in Psalm 106:1: “Praise ye the Lord! *Hallelujah*. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.” There is (1) the

doxology; (2) invitation; [and] (3) the reason that we should and why we should give thanks always. But “who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can shew forth all his praise?” (Psa 106:2b). That is, it is impossible for any man in the world to do this great duty as he should. “Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times” (Psa 106:3). As if he had said, “This indeed is a vast duty; but yet *he* makes the best essay[14] towards it *that* sets himself constantly to serve God and keep His commandments.” Now, this no man can do, neither perfectly, but only by the merits and in the strength of Christ. He, making it the desire of his soul to serve the Lord, is accepted though endeavors fall short; and therefore [he] is pronounced blessed. For to be “a doer of the work” by evangelical obedience makes him “blessed in his deed” (Jam 1:25). Labor then to bless the Lord not only in words but in deed, and you shall be blessed.

6. If we would offer thanks to the Lord acceptably, let us do it “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Eph 5:20)—Thus are we directed by the Spirit of God, (1) because all mercy comes to us by Him; (2) because nothing is accepted but in Him; [and] (3) because it is one part of His priestly office to receive the prayers and praises of the saints in His golden censer upon the golden altar with much incense (Rev 8:3, 4). “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb 13:15), alluding to that of the prophet, who calls it “the calves of our lips” (Hos 14:2). Through Christ’s propitiatory sacrifice our eucharistical[15] sacrifices are accepted, and we must offer these under the gospel “continually.”

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- 1 **Schools** – term for medieval universities of philosophy and theology exemplified by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and Duns Scotus (1265-1308).
- 2 **cashiered** – got rid of; banished.
- 3 **St. Austin** (AD 354-430) – Abbreviation for St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, early church theologian born in Tagaste, North Africa.
- 4 **wormwood** – the plant *Artemisia Absinthium*, proverbial for its bitter taste.
- 5 **dreggy** – the sediment which settles at the bottom of a liquid in a vessel or cup, and therefore worthless, vile.
- 6 **lien** – archaic past tense of the verb *to lie*, as in lying down.
- 7 **balk** – to pass by or avoid.
- 8 **quintessence** – the highly concentrated essence of a thing.
- 9 **duly** – in a proper manner.
- 10 **comely** – pleasing; attractive; beautiful.
- 11 **Magnificat** – the hymn of Mary in Luke 1:46-55, hence, a hymn or song of praise.
- 12 **sublimate** – to refine and exalt.
- 13 **conversation** – lifestyle; behavior.
- 14 **essay** – attempt.
- 15 **eucharistical** – the GK. word for *thanks* is *eucharisteo*; therefore, eucharistical offerings means “what we offer to Christ with thanksgiving.”

WHERE ARE THE NINE?

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole”—Luke 17:15-19.

You have often heard the leprosy described: it was a very horrible disease; I should think the worst that flesh is heir to. We ought to be much more grateful than we are that this fell[1] disease is scarcely known in our favored country. You have also heard what an instructive symbol it is in human flesh of what sin is in the human soul, how it pollutes, how it

destroys. I need not go into that sad subject. But here was a sight for the Savior—ten men that were lepers! A mass of sorrow indeed! What sights our Lord still sees every day in this sin-defiled world! Not ten men that are sinners, or even ten millions merely, are to be found all the world over, but on this earth there are a thousand millions of men diseased in soul. It is a miracle of condescension that the Son of God should set foot in such a lazarus[2] as this.

Yet observe the triumphant grace of our Lord Jesus to the ten men that were lepers. It would make a man's fortune; it would crown a man with lifelong fame to heal one leper. But our Lord healed ten lepers at once. So full a fountain of grace is He, so freely doth He dispense His favor, that the ten are bidden to go and show themselves to the priests because they are healed; and on the way to the priests they find it is so. None of us can imagine the joy they felt when they perceived that they were healed. Oh, it must have been a sort of new birth to them to find their flesh made fresh as that of a little child! It would have been wonderful if the whole ten had hurried back and fallen at Jesus' feet and lifted up their voices in a tenfold psalm. The sad thing about it is that nine of them, though they were healed, went on their way to the priests in the coolest possible manner: we never hear of their return, they drop out of the story altogether. They have obtained a blessing, they go their way, and there is an end of them.

Only one of them, a Samaritan, returned to express his thanks. Misery has strange bedfellows; and so the nine lepers of the seed of Israel consorted with an outcast Samaritan: and he, strange to tell it, was the only one, who, seized by a sudden impulse of gratitude, made his way to his Benefactor, fell down at His feet and began to glorify God.

If you search the world around, among all choice spices you shall scarcely meet with the frankincense of gratitude. It ought to be as common as the dew-drops that hang upon the hedges in the morning; but, alas, the world is dry of thankfulness to God! Gratitude to Christ was scarce enough in His own day. I had almost said it was ten to one that nobody would praise Him; but I must correct myself a little: it was nine to one. One day in seven is for the Lord's worship; but not one man in ten is devoted to His praise. Our subject is thankfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. I begin with the point that I have already touched upon, namely, the singularity[3] of thankfulness. *Here note: there are more who receive benefits than ever give praise for them.* Nine persons healed, one person glorifying God; nine persons healed of leprosy, mark you, and only one person kneeling down at Jesus' feet and thanking Him for it! If for this surpassing benefit, which might have made the dumb to sing, men only thank the Lord in the proportion of one to nine, what shall I say of what we call God's common mercies—only common because He is so liberal with them, for each of them is inestimably valuable? Life, health, eyesight, hearing, domestic love, the continuance of friends—I cannot attempt a catalogue of benefits that we receive every day; and yet is there one man in nine that praises God for these? A cold "Thank God!" is all that is given. Others of us do praise Him for these benefits, but what poor praises!

We do not praise the Lord fitly, proportionately, intensely. We receive a continent of mercies and only return an island of praise. He gives us blessings new every morning and fresh every evening, great is His faithfulness; and yet we let the years roll round and seldom observe a day of praise. Sad is it to see God all goodness and man all ingratitude!

But there is something more remarkable than this: the number of those who pray is greater than the number of those who praise. For these ten men that were lepers all prayed. Poor and feeble as their voices had become through disease, yet they lifted them up in prayer and united in crying: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" They all joined in the Litany,[4] "Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ, have mercy upon us!" But when they came to the Te Deum,[5] magnifying and praising God, only one of them took up the note. One would have thought that all who prayed would praise, but it is not so. Cases have been where a whole ship's crew in time of storm has prayed, and yet none of that crew have sung the praise of God when the storm has become a calm. Multitudes of our fellow-citizens pray when they are sick and near to dying; but when they grow better, their praises grow sick unto death. The angel of mercy, listening at their door, has heard no canticle[6] of love, no song of thankfulness. Alas, it is too sadly true that more pray than praise!

I put it in another shape to you who are God's people—most of us pray more than we praise. You pray little enough, I fear; but praise, where is that? At our family altars we always pray, but seldom praise. In our closets we constantly pray, but do we frequently praise? Prayer is not so heavenly an exercise as praise; prayer is for time, but praise is for eternity. Praise therefore deserves the first and highest place, does it not? Let us commence the employment which occupies the celestials. Prayer is for a beggar; but methinks he is a poor beggar who does not also give praise when he receives an alms.[7] Praise ought to follow naturally upon the heels of prayer, even when it does not, by divine grace, go before it. If you are afflicted, if you lose money, if you fall into poverty, if your child is ill, if chastisement visits you in any form, you

begin to pray. And I do not blame you for it, but should it be all praying and no praising? Come; let us chide[8] ourselves as we acknowledge that we offer so much more prayer than praise!

On the same head, let me remark that more obey ritual than ever praise Christ. When Jesus said, “Go shew yourselves to the priests,” off they went, all ten of them; not one stopped behind. Yet only one came back to behold a personal Savior and to praise His name. So today — you will go to church, you will go to chapel, you will read a book, you will perform an outward religious action; but oh, how little praising God, how little lying at His feet, and feeling that we could sing our souls away for gratitude to Him who hath done such great things for us! External religious exercises are easy enough and common enough; but the internal matter, the drawing out of the heart in thankful love, how scarce a thing it is! Nine obey ritual where only one praises the Lord .

Once more, to come yet closer home, there are more that believe than there are that praise: for these ten men did believe, but only one praised the Lord Jesus. Their faith was about the leprosy; and according to their faith, so it was unto them. This faith, though it only concerned their leprosy, was yet a very wonderful faith. It was remarkable that they should believe the Lord Jesus though He did not even say, “Be healed,” nor speak a word to them to that effect, but simply said, “Go shew yourselves to the priests.” With parched skins and death burning its way into their hearts, they went bravely off in confidence that Jesus must mean to bless them. It was admirable faith; and yet none of the nine who thus believed ever came back to praise Christ for the mercy received. I am afraid that there is much of faith, better faith than theirs, which concerns spiritual things, which has yet to flower into practical gratitude. It is a faith which bears few blossoms of praise. I chide myself sometimes that I have wrestled with God in prayer, like Elias upon Carmel, but I have not magnified the name of the Lord, like Mary of Nazareth. We do not laud[9] our Lord in proportion to the benefits received. God’s treasury would overflow if the revenue of thanks were more honestly paid. Faith was only real in these lepers so far as their leprosy was concerned; they did not believe in our Lord’s divinity or believe for eternal life. So also among ourselves there are men who get benefits from Christ, who even hope that they are saved, but they do not praise Him.

This man knew that he was healed, he had full assurance upon that point, and the next impulse of his spirit was to hie[10] him back to where he stood who had been His glorious Physician, to fall at His feet, and praise Him with a loud voice, glorifying God. Oh, that all my timorous,[11] doubting hearers may do the same!

II. I HAVE A GREAT DEAL TO SAY, AND LITTLE TIME TO SAY IT IN; THEREFORE, BRIEFLY LET US NOTE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE THANKFULNESS. This man’s simple act may show the character of praise. It does not take the same shape in everybody. Love to Christ, like living flowers, wears many forms; only artificial flowers are all alike. Living praise is marked by individuality. This man was one of ten when he was a leper; he was all alone when here turned to praise God. You can sin in company, you can go to hell in company; but when you obtain salvation, you will come to Jesus all alone. And when you are saved, though you will delight to praise God with others if they will join with you, yet if they will not do so, you will delight to sing a solo of gratitude. This man quits the company of the other nine and comes to Jesus. If Christ has saved you and your heart is right, you will say, “I must praise Him; I must love Him.” You will not be kept back by the chilly state of nine out of ten of your old companions, by the worldliness of your family, or by the coldness of the church. Your personal love to Jesus will make you speak even if heaven and earth and sea are all wrapped in silence.

You have a heart burning with adoring love, and you feel as if it were the only heart under heaven that had love to Christ in it; and therefore you must feed the heavenly flame. You must indulge its desires, you must express its longings; the fire is in your bones and must have vent. Since there is individuality about true praise, come, brothers in Christ, let us praise God each one in his own way!

The next characteristic of this man’s thankfulness was promptness. He was back to Christ almost immediately; for I cannot suppose the Savior lingered at the village-gate for hours that day. He was too busy to be long on one spot: the Master went about doing good. The man was back soon; and when you are saved, the quicker you can express your gratitude the better. Second thoughts are best, they say; but this is not the case when the heart is full of love to Christ. Carry out your first thoughts; do not stop for the second, unless indeed your heart is so on flame with heavenly devotion that second ones consume the first. Go at once and praise the Savior. Why should praise be kept waiting at the door even for a night? The manna came fresh in the morning; so let your praises rise betimes.[12]

The next quality of this man's praise was spirituality. We perceive this in the fact that he paused on his way to the priests. It was his duty to go to the priests: he had received a command to do so; but there is a proportion in all things, and some duties are greater than others. He thought to himself: "I was ordered to go to the priests, but I am healed, and this new circumstance affects the order of my duties: the first thing I ought to do is to go back and bear witness to the people, glorifying God in the midst of them all, and falling down at Christ's feet." It is well to observe the holy law of proportion. Carnal minds take the ritualistic duty first; that which is external outweighs with them that which is spiritual. But love soon perceives that the substance is more precious than the shadow, and that to bow at the feet of the great High Priest must be a greater duty than to go before the lesser priests. So the healed leper went first to Jesus. He felt that his main duty was in person to adore the divine Person who had delivered him from his fell disease. Let us go first to Jesus. Let us in spirit bow before HIM. Ah, yes! Come to our services, join in our regular worship: but if you love the Lord, you will want something besides this: you will pine to get to Jesus Himself, and tell Him how you love Him.

True thankfulness also manifests itself in intensity. Intensity is perceptible in this case: he turned back and with a loud voice glorified God. He could have praised, could he not, in a quieter way? Yes, but when you are just cured of leprosy, and your once feeble voice is restored to you, you cannot whisper out your praises. Brethren, you know it would be impossible to be coolly proper when you are newly saved! This man with a loud voice glorified God!

Some of our converts are very wild at times, they grow extravagant. Do not blame them. Why not indulge them? It will not hurt you. We are all of us so very proper and orderly that we can afford to have an extravagant one among us now and then. Oh, that God would send more of that sort to wake the church up, that we also, might all begin to praise God with heart and voice, with soul and substance, with might and main! Hallelujah! My own heart feels the glow.

In true thankfulness, next, there is humility. This man fell down at Jesus' feet: he did not feel perfectly in his place until he was lying there. "I am nobody, Lord," he seemed to say, and therefore he fell on his face. But the place for his prostration was "at His feet." I would rather be nobody at Christ's feet than everybody anywhere else! There is no place so honorable as down at the feet of Jesus. Ah, to lie there always and just love Him wholly and let self die out! True thankfulness lies low before the Lord.

Added to this there was worship. He fell down at Jesus' feet, glorifying God and giving thanks unto Him. Let us worship our Savior. Let others think as they like about Jesus, but we will put our finger into the print of the nails and say, "My Lord and my God!" If there be a God, He is God in Christ Jesus to us. We shall never cease to adore Him Who has proved His Godhead by delivering us from the leprosy of sin. All worship be to His supreme majesty!

One thing more about this man I want to notice as to his thankfulness, and that is, his silence as to censuring[13] others. When the Savior said, "Where are the nine?" I notice that this man did not reply. The Master said, "Where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." But the adoring stranger did not stand up and say, "O Lord, they are all gone off to the priests: I am astonished at them that they did not return to praise Thee!" O brothers, we have enough to do to mind our own business, when we feel the grace of God in our own hearts! If I can only get through my service of praise, I shall have no mind to accuse any of you who are ungrateful. The Master says: "Where are the nine?" but the poor healed man at His feet has no word to say against those cruel nine; he is too much occupied with his personal adoration.

III. I have not half done, and yet you cannot possibly stay beyond the appointed hour of closing: therefore I must compress my third division as closely as I possibly can — let us consider THE BLESSEDNESS OF THANKFULNESS. This man was more blessed by far than the nine. They were healed, but they were not blessed as he was. There is a great blessedness in thankfulness.

First, because it is right. Should not Christ be praised? This man did what he could: and there is always an ease of conscience and a rest of spirit, when you feel that you are doing all you can in a right cause, even though you fall far short of your own desire. At this moment, my brethren, magnify the Lord .

Next, there is this blessing in thankfulness, that it is a manifestation of personal love. I love the doctrines of grace, I love the church of God, I love the Sabbath, I love the ordinances; but I love Jesus most. My heart never rests until I can glorify God personally and give thanks unto the Christ personally. The indulgence of personal love to Christ is one of the

sweetest things out of heaven; and you cannot indulge that personal love so well as by personal thankfulness both of heart and mouth and act and deed.

There is another blessedness about thankfulness: it has clear views. The thankful eye sees far and deep. The man healed of leprosy, before he went on glorifying God, gave thanks to Jesus. If he had thanked Jesus and stopped there, I should have said that his eyes were not well open. But when he saw God in Christ and therefore glorified God for what Christ had done, he showed a deep insight into spiritual truth. He had begun to discover the mysteries of the divine and human person of the blessed Lord. We learn much by prayer. Did not Luther say, “To have prayed well is to have studied well”? I venture to add a rider[14] to what Luther has so ably said: To have praised well is to have studied better. Praise is a great instructor. Prayer and praise are the oars by which a man may row his boat into the deep waters of the knowledge of Christ.

The next blessedness about praise is that it is acceptable to Christ. The Lord Jesus was evidently pleased; He was grieved to think the other nine should not come back, but He was charmed with this one man that he did return. The question, “Where are the nine?” bears within it a commendation of the one. Whatever pleases Christ should be carefully cultivated by us. If praise be pleasant to Him, let us continually magnify His name. Prayer is the straw of the wheat, but praise is the ear. Jesus loves to see the blade grow up, but He loves better to pluck the golden ears when the harvest of praise is ripe.

Next, notice, that the blessedness of thankfulness is that it receives the largest blessing, for the Savior said to this man what He had not said to the others, “Thy faith hath made thee whole.” If you would live the higher life, be much in praising God. Some of you are in the lowest state as yet, as this man was for he was a Samaritan: but by praising God he rose to be a songster rather than a stranger. How often have I noticed how the greatest sinner becomes the greatest praiser! Those that were farthest off from Christ, and hope, and purity, when they become saved, feel that they owe the most, and therefore they love the best. May it be the ambition of every one of us, even if we be not originally among the vilest of the vile, yet to feel that we owe Jesus most; and there f o re we will praise Him most: thus shall we receive the richest blessedness from His hands!

From sermon #1935, delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, on Thursday evening, October 7th, 1886.

1 **fell** – keen, piercing, intensely painful or destructive.

2 **lazarhouse** – house for poor, diseased persons, especially lepers.

3 **singularity** – a trait marking something as distinct from others.

4 **litany** — A liturgical prayer consisting of a series of petitions recited by a leader alternating with fixed responses by the congregation.

5 **Te Deum** – from the Late Latin *Te Deum* (laudamus), You, God, (we praise), the opening words of the hymn used in church liturgy. Here used figuratively.

6 **canticle** – a little song; a hymn.

7 **alms** – charitable relief such as money or goods given to the poor.

8 **chide** – to scold mildly for the purpose of correction.

9 **laud** – to give praise to; to glorify.

10 **hie** – to hasten; to go quickly.

11 **timorous** – timid; fearful of danger.

12 **betimes** – at an early hour.

13 **censuring** – expressing strong disapproval or harsh criticism.

14 **rider** – an additional supplement arising from something said or written.

