

Lord, Teach Us to Pray-Thanksgiving!

Today we will look at the third element of prayer, thanksgiving. In the past couple weeks, we have looked at adoration, where our prayers are centered on the character and works of God. Then last week we looked at the role of confession in our prayers.

The prayer of adoration focus' on Who God is while a prayer of thanksgiving focus' on what God has done for us. And when someone does something nice for you it is only fitting to thank them for it.

Let's look together at what prayers of thanksgiving look like. First, praise is another word for giving thanks.

Hebrews 13:15, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name."

So, here we learn that this prayer should be continual.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Not only is this prayer continual, but it is to be offered in all circumstances, good and bad.

Psalm 100 is an excellent example of a prayer of thanksgiving:

Psalm 100:1-5, "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. 2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. 3 Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5 For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."

As we read Scripture like this, we delight in it, say how nice these words are, but why is thanksgiving so important?

Colossians 4:2 gives us some insight into this question.

Colossians 4:2, “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”

OK, you get the devotion to prayer and the thankful part, but why is Paul telling them to be watchful?

Well, the word Paul uses here is the same word Matthew uses in Matthew 26 when Jesus is speaking to His disciples, asking them to pray and be watchful. Why?

Praying without being alert to the responsibility that thanks has can lead us to selfish requests. We will look at requests next week, but before we get to requests, we must cultivate a thankful heart in prayer.

As I mentioned earlier, giving thanks is thanking God for the personal blessings He has bestowed on us. But it also includes those times of distress and many other things. Look at these examples from Paul.

Colossians 1:3-4, “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people—”

Ephesians 1:15-16, “For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.”

Philippians 1:3-6, “I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 1:2, “We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers.”

Paul, over and over gave thanks for the people in the church. Do we have that vision and understanding on how important the people around us are in the work of the ministry?

When gratitude is a part of our prayer life:

1. You shift from worry to worship!

Mark 4:39, “He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.”

This verse comes from the story of when Jesus was asleep in the boat and a storm came up. After Jesus calmed the storm He asked his disciples why they were afraid and why their faith was so small.

2. You remember God's faithfulness!

Psalm 77:11, "I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago."

A great way to remember God's deeds is to write them down in a journal. This is your personal story of God's interactions with you. When you write them down it gives you something to go back to which reminds you of God's faithfulness and our reason to be thankful.

3. You build peace!

Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

You can stop right here and that would be enough to give thanks in prayer!

4. You grow spiritually!

1 Thessalonians 5:18, "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

So, **how do we give thanks in all circumstances?**

1. Start with praise!

Psalm 145:8-9, "The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. 9 The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made."

2. Be specific!

James 1:17, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

Begin to name those good gifts. Thank God for them. Are you thankful for every breath? When you have asthma, you give thanks for every breath.

When you sit down for a meal do you give thanks for God's provision of that food?

When you lie down at night do you thank God for another day?

3. Thank Him in Difficulty!

Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

And if we believe that all things work together for our good, shouldn't we be thankful in all things?

4. Surrender the rest!

Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

When we do these things, offering to God thanks for His direction, for His work in our lives. When we have an attitude filled with gratitude we are changed. We align with God's will for our lives. We become obedient to the one we call God, King, Lord.

Open your Bible to Psalms 113-118. The Psalms are called the Hallel. These are Psalms read during Israel's festivals. Just see as you glance at these Psalms the works of thanks toward God. You can make these Psalms your prayers of thanksgiving.

When you get frustrated, are you giving thanks? What would happen if you turned those frustrating moments into praise and thanksgiving sessions? Would it change your heart?

Do you thank God for every meal? For every added day of life? For every breath? Are you thankful?

2 Practices of Thanks!

Offering

Communion