

Saturday, February 18, 2016—2017 Southern California Grace Conference

Topic: *Rejoice Evermore*—1 Thes. 5:16, Phil. 3:1; 4:4. This study will focus on the place where we as believers are to find true lasting joy and rejoicing.

Introduction

- If you look at your program you will see that I am scheduled to teach on the topic of thanksgiving tomorrow morning at 9:30. In my studies, I have become convinced that thanksgiving and joy are inseparably linked. Thanksgiving and gratitude are a prerequisite for joy and rejoicing. Therefore, I have elected to develop both topics around the central theme of thanksgiving.
- In order to accomplish our purpose this morning I would like to consider the following points:
 - Define our Terms
 - The Ungrateful Heart
 - The Thankful Heart
 - Thanksgiving: the Seedbed of Joy

Defining our Terms

- To get started, we need to acknowledge that there is a cluster of different words in the bible associated with thanksgiving: thank, thanks, thanked, thankful, thankfulness, thanksgiving, thankworthy, and unthankful.
 - *Thank*—“To express gratitude for a favor; to make acknowledgments to one for kindness bestowed.”
 - *Thanks*—“Expression of gratitude; an acknowledgment made to express a sense of favor or kindness received. Gratitude is the feeling or sentiment excited by kindness; thanks, are the expression of that sentiment.
- When defined using Webster’s 1828 Dictionary each of the English words listed above were associated with notion of “gratitude.”
 - *Gratitude*—“An emotion of the heart, excited by a favor or benefit received; a sentiment of kindness or good will towards a benefactor; **thankfulness**. Gratitude is an agreeable emotion, consisting in or accompanied with good will to a benefactor, and a disposition to make a suitable return of benefits or services, or when no return can be made, with a desire to see the benefactor prosperous and happy. Gratitude is a virtue of the highest

excellence, as it implies a feeling and generous heart, and a proper sense of duty.”
(Webster’s 1828)

- So if thankfulness and thanksgiving are the same thing then unthankfulness and ingratitude would also go together.

The Unthankful Heart

- The word “unthankful” appears 2 times in 2 verses in the KJB. Each time the word appears there is a clear connection between ingratitude and evil.
- Luke 6:35—notice the connection between the “unthankful” and the “evil” that is made in this verse. The fundamental problem with someone who is evil is that they are unthankful.
 - Matthew 5:44-45
- *Unthankful*—“Not thankful; **ungrateful**; not making acknowledgments for good received.” (Webster’s 1828)
- II Timothy 3:2—in his final epistle, at the end of his life Paul tells Timothy what the last days of the dispensation of grace are going to look like. Verses 2-7 describe the condition of mankind during that time. How would you describe people that manifest the attitudes and actions described in the passage? I would describe them as “evil.” According to verse 2 they are “unthankful” or in a state of “unthankfulness.”
 - *Unthankfulness*--“Neglect or omission of acknowledgment for good received; want of a sense of kindness or benefits; ingratitude. Immoderate favors breed first unthankfulness, and afterwards hate.”
- An inability to be thankful leads to hatred towards the one bestowing kind benefits. Eventually the unthankful heart seeks to repay kind benefits with evil.
 - *Ingratitude*—“1) Want of gratitude or sentiments of kindness for favors received; insensibility to favors, and want of a disposition to repay them; unthankfulness. 2) Retribution of evil for good.” (Webster’s 1828)
 - *Ungrateful*—“1) Not grateful; not feeling thankful for favors. 2) Not making returns, or making ill returns for kindness. 3) Making no returns for culture; as an ungrateful soil. 4) Unpleasing; unacceptable. Harsh sounds are ungrateful to the ear.” (Webster’s 1828)
 - *Ungratefulness*—“1) Ingratitude; want of due feelings of kindness for favors received; ill return for good. 2) Disagreeableness; unpleasing quality.” (Webster’s 1828)

- Romans 1:19-20—the gentiles knew who God was because God has showed himself unto them. One of the ways he did this was through his creation.
- Romans 1:21-23—notice the degenerative spiral in this verse.
 - The Gentiles knew who God
 - Became unthankful and did not glorify God as God **which leads to**
 - Becoming vain in their imaginations **which leads to**
 - Their foolish hearts being darkened **which leads to**
 - Professing themselves to be wise **which leads to**
 - The transferring to the glory due to the uncorruptible God into the worship of images made after corruptible things.
- Romans 1:24-32—all of the evil described in this passage finds its point of origin in verse 21 in their lack of thankfulness and not glorifying God as God. Consider all the evil that resulted from a lack of thanksgiving.
 - Fall of Lucifer
 - Temptation of Eve
- Ingratitude is the seedbed of sin. We kill contentment by comparison.

The Thankful Heart

- Ephesians 2:8-9—how are we saved? We are saved by grace through faith. What is grace? *Webster's 1828 Dictionary* defines Grace as: 1) Favor; good will; kindness; disposition to oblige another; 2) the free unmerited love and favor of God, the spring and source of all the benefits men receive from him. So grace is unearned favor and kindness from God that we do not deserve.
 - Ephesians 2:1-3—because of Adam's sin, we were dead in trespasses and sins and were by nature the children of wrath. In other words, we had God's wrath abiding upon us.
 - Ephesians 2:4-5—but God who is rich in mercy loved us and provide a way through Christ for us to be saved from his wrath by the grace of God.
- Ephesians 2:8—the Greek word translated “Grace” is the word *charis*. 8 different times in the New Testament this word is translate either “thank” or “thanks” by the translators of the KJB.
 - Luke 6:32-34—“thank”
 - Romans 6:17—“God be thanked”
 - I Corinthians 15:57—“thanks be to God”

- I Peter 2:19—“thankworthy”
- Philippians 4:6—the Greek word translated “thanksgiving” is the word *eucharistia*. 15 times this word is translated in the KJB: thanksgiving (9), giving of thanks (3), thankfulness (1).
- I Thessalonians 5:18—the Greek word translated “give thanks” is the word *eucharisteō*. 39 times this word is translated in the KJB: give thanks (26), thank (12), thankful (1)
- Please consider that all the major Greek words in the New Testament associated with the giving of thanks or thanksgiving are all connected associated with “grace.”
 - *Charis*—“grace,” “thank,” “thanked,” “thanks be to God,” “thankworthy”
 - *Eucharistia*—“thanksgiving”
 - *Eucharisteō*—“give thanks”
- When one considers these facts along with the definitions of the relevant English words the heart of thanksgiving comes into the focus. Fundamentally, the heart of thanksgiving allows the unearned, unmerited, favor, kindness, and grace of God to stir up the sentiment of gratitude for all that God has done for us and on our behalf and then it expresses that sentiment by giving thanks to God for his grace. A heart of thanksgiving is literally taking the grace of God and living it out daily in the details of life.

Thanksgiving: The Seed Bed of Joy

- Luke 22:19—on the eve of fulfilling the reason for which Christ came, knowing that the time of his death was at hand, and with full knowledge not only the impending physical agony but spiritual separation from the father that he would endure Christ gave thanks.
- Matthew 26:27—Jesus Christ gave thanks both for his broken body and his shed blood. Jesus offers thanksgiving for that which will break him, crush him, and cause separation from God the father. Christ was thankful for the privilege of being able to lay down his own life in payment for and they by accomplish eternal salvation for you and I.
- Hebrews 12:2—why did Christ endure the cross? For the joy set before him. Christ could give thanks to God despite pain, anguish, suffering, and separation because he knew the joy it would produce to have made satisfaction for sin.
- There is no joy without thanksgiving. This is the Grace Life, the life of *charis*, the life of “thanksgiving” (*Eucharistia*), the life that offers itself in service to God motivated by a profound appreciation for what God has done on our behalf. It is the only life and lifestyle capable of experiencing joy to its fullest capacity.

- I Corinthians 11:23-26—the observance of the Lord’s Table is to be done according to Paul, “in remembrance of me.” By observing the Lord’s Table, we offer back to God the Father the same thanksgiving that the son offered in gratitude and with full knowledge of all that Christ accomplished upon the cross. It is here, in the work of Christ that we are to find our joy.
- I Thessalonians 5:16
- Philippians 3:1—the expression “rejoice in the Lord” is a present active imperative. Paul is commanding the Philippians to find their source of rejoicing in the Lord.
- Philippians 4:4—once again the expression to “rejoice” found twice in this verse is a present active imperative. Thanksgiving is the only sustainable source of lasting joy. And thanksgiving is connected with the grace of God.
- When we quench thanksgiving, we kill joy.
- Ephesians 4:31-32
 - “Do I really smother my own joy because I believe that anger achieves more than love? That Satan’s way is more powerful, more practical, more fulfilling in my daily life than Jesus’ way? Why else get angry? Isn’t it because I think complain, exasperation, resent, will pound me up into the full life I really want? When I choose—and it is a choice—to crush joy with bitterness, am I not purposefully choosing to take the way of the Prince of Darkness? Choosing the angry way of Lucifer because I think its more effective—more expedient—than giving thanks?” (Voskamp, 1236)