

# Giving Thanks; Thanksgiving

Nov. 24, 2013

## **DAY 1: Thanksgiving: an Antidote to Arrogance**

*Deuteronomy 8:10 When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. <sup>11</sup> Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. <sup>12</sup> Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, <sup>13</sup> and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, <sup>14</sup> then **your heart will become proud** and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. <sup>15</sup> He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. <sup>16</sup> He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. <sup>17</sup> You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." <sup>18</sup> But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.*

1. What reasons does God give for giving thanks to Him?

a. ...in verse 14--

b. ...in verse 15--

c. ...in verse 16--

d. ... in verse 17--

e. ...in verse 18--

2. What does Moses imply about our human nature?

3. The opposite of gratitude can be:

a. Taking credit ourselves when things "go well."

b. Whining, complaining, grumbling, murmuring when things "go poorly."

4. Which one are you more prone to do? How does that affect your attitude?



### DAY 3: The Power of Thanks

1. In the following story underline the phrases that strike you about Paul's faith and perspective:

*Acts 27:14 Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the "northeaster," swept down from the island.<sup>15</sup> The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along ....<sup>17</sup> the men ... passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together....*

*<sup>18</sup> We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. <sup>19</sup> On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard... <sup>20</sup> When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.*

*<sup>21</sup> After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. <sup>22</sup> But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. <sup>23</sup> Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me <sup>24</sup> and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' <sup>25</sup> So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. <sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island."*

*<sup>27</sup> On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land... <sup>29</sup> Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. <sup>30</sup> In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow. <sup>31</sup> Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved." <sup>32</sup> So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it fall away.*

*<sup>33</sup> Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. "For the last fourteen days," he said, "you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food--you haven't eaten anything. <sup>34</sup> Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head." <sup>35</sup> After he said this, **he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all.** Then he broke it and began to eat. <sup>36</sup> They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves.*

*<sup>40</sup> Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. <sup>41</sup> But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf. <sup>42</sup> The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. <sup>43</sup> But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. <sup>44</sup> The rest were to get there on planks or on pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land in safety.*

1. How do you suspect Paul came to be **thankful** in such dire situations?

2. His expression of thanks is rooted in the faithfulness of God even in life and death situations! What have you learned about the faithfulness of God?

## DAY 4: Thanksgiving: Pride and Humility

*1 Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?*

1. The last question in this verse is a rhetorical one--no answer expected, because what they were doing was so ridiculous. However, they did boast. They boasted because of their *perspective*. Let's try to analyze what was going on their hearts and eyes ...

Place a check mark next to the following attitudes that contribute to boasting:

I work hard. I deserve this.

I'm just using my natural talents and abilities.

I can handle this.

I don't need any outside help. Pleeeeeeeze... geeeeeesh

What's mine is mine.

It's insulting to my intelligence that anyone would trivialize the hard work I do.

2. What would you add to that list?

3. What will happen to the man if this attitude persists? What will happen to his heart? What will happen to his relationships?

Over time, is he likely to be more:

a. Contented or discontented?

b. Merciful of others or more critical?

c. Proud or more humble?

d. Harder to be around or a delight to be around?

4. All of these, and a whole lot more flow out of a man's perspective. Below, jot down your thoughts on why being grateful, thankful, and humble is wise.

## DAY 5: The Antidote of Thanksgiving

*Ephesians 5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children<sup>2</sup> and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

1. Paul hits some big themes in 5:1-2!!!
  - a. Be imitators of God!
  - b. Live as a dearly loved child!
  - c. Live a life of love!
  - d. ...as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us
  - e. ...as a way of pleasing God!
2. What strikes you the most from that list?

3. Next, Paul itemizes a list of sins that can derail us from the big things we just read!

*Eph. 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.<sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.<sup>5</sup> For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

- a. Underline each of the sins mentioned in 5:3-4.
- b. What are the sin "standards" Paul sets in 5:3? (There are three)
- c. 5:3 has "big sins," as people think of these. 5:4 has "little sins" as people incorrectly think.
- d. Juxtaposed against three "big" sins and three "little" sins, Paul gives one weapon with which to fight back? What is it? (in 5:4)
4. Why would thanksgiving be the main antidote to all six of these sins?
5. How much is giving thanks a part of your daily experience?
6. Begin an on-going "Giving Thanks" list. Keep it handy and visible! Add to that list at least once/week! (Add the dates for "bonus points")