

“What Part Does Giving Thanks Play in our Relationship with God?”

By Brother Parrish Lee

Sunday, November 2nd, 2014

Giving honor to God, Who is the head of my life. Giving honor to the omnipotent, omniscient, Almighty, the Longsuffering, the Patient, the Kind, the Merciful, the Gracious, the Benevolent, the Wonderful, the Miraculous... Giving thanks to He who the angels give reverence to. Giving thanks to Him who puts the stars in place and says that they are not clean in His sight. Giving thanks to the Great One, who saw fit to give His only begotten Son for us; giving thanks to Him who went to Calvary's mountain, spread His arms wide, and saw every one of us. Giving thanks and honor to Him. Giving thanks and honor to His servants who were working and leading in this ministry; to our founding pastor, he and his family, our pastor, he and his family, to all those who stood in the gap to make up the hedge, who answered the call to be faithful where God would have them. Giving thanks to them. Giving thanks to all of you, who say, “You know what? I want to come before the Lord; I want to worship. I want to bring what I have.” Some say, “I want to come because I have a petition to lay before the Lord.” Some say, “I want to come because I've just got to give my heart soul, strength to Him.” Giving honor to all of y'all.

Happy Sunday morning. Having just come through a Time of Sanctification, and our prayer is that it was a blessing for everyone. I want to thank my accountability team that helped me so much, even after things happened, and I wasn't as faithful as I hoped to be, I learned so much from every one of you. Now we're going into the month of November, where our theme for the month is going to be from Second Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 2:14 *Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.*

Giving thanks unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ. We're going to take off this month, and, as we know, this is the month of thankfulness, so we're going to be talking about that this month. Our scripture for today:

Luke 17:13-19 *And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, **Go shew yourselves unto the priests.** And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. 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.***

If we could just bow our heads for just a moment. Lord, we do come before You, and we are continually flat-out amazed at Your goodness, and kindness, and mercy. The way that You are able to visit, the way You are able to answer, the way You are able to make us know, make Your presence known unto us, and You treat us as Your children. We thank You and praise You for that, Lord, and we turn unto You to give You glory and honor, and ask, God, ask that, at this time of our worship, at this time of the service, as we go over the reading of Your Word, that, God, You would do as it said in Your Word, that You would not allow it to return unto you void, but that it would surely accomplish that to which You sent it. Lord, we just want to continue to be Your servants. Great as You would call us to be; humble as You would

call us to be, obedient as You would call us to be, anointed as You would call us to be, and blessed as You would call us to be. This we do come and pray and claim in Jesus' name, and everybody said, amen.

Well, happy November, everyone. Happy November, and I know we have different thoughts and things in our minds that we might look forward to, and the truth is, that, as we look forward to this, November brings up certain things in our minds. For some of us, we're looking forward to the end of the month, when we have that great big old turkey, and maybe some sweet potatoes, and maybe some dressing, and maybe some mac and cheese—the four-cheese type—maybe some cornbread, and, yeah, some of us is looking forward to that. Some of us are looking forward to, "Hey! I get two days off of work!" Two days off of work, or school, or whatever... "I get two days off!" Some of us are looking forward to that, amen. November doesn't get the notoriety that some of the other months get, because it doesn't bring in the money that some of the other holidays have going on around them. If it was all about the money, they could say, "Well, that's not November; November's not a month for money. We could talk about harvest, but there's not a whole lot of money in that. We could talk about certain things..." So, you don't see so many commercials advertising... And, if you're like me, you've already seen commercials for Christmas. Christmas! Already seen the commercials; the holidays... Black Friday, yeah! Nothing to do with Thanksgiving, it's the day after Thanksgiving—they don't even mention Thanksgiving! "It's Black Friday; bring your money and spend it so we can take it and be happy and get in the black." Yeah, your money, your money, your money, your money... But, Thanksgiving, this month of thanks, it's supposed to be a month of reflection. It's supposed to be a time of saying, "You know, I'm thankful for some things, so I came to give thanks for those things." So, here, it leads us to the question, "What part does giving thanks play in our relationship with God?"

As we read from the Book of Luke, we see here—and you're familiar with the story—we see here the story of the ten lepers, how the ten of them cried out unto the Lord, "Master, have mercy on us!" and the Lord says, "Go, and show yourselves unto the priests." As they were on their way, the Bible says, that they found themselves healed. The Bible says that one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, he returned to give thanks and praise unto God. The Bible goes on to say that the Lord asked a question, "Where then are the nine? Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?" The Bible goes on to say that, "They are not found to give glory to God, save this stranger." "They are not found to give glory to God..." Now, when you say something isn't found, it gives the position that it was lost, or something that was looked for. Something that was looked for, so you would have to ask, "Well, what was being looked for, here?" Quite simply, the Lord said, "they are not found to give glory to God." So, the Lord was looking for those to give glory, give thanks unto Him. So, we see that, after the blessing, giving thanks is the next step before going on and building a relationship. After we receive the blessing, giving thanks, glorifying God is the very next step in building our relationship with God. We see that only one returned to give thanks.

Now, another two points is: 1) The fact that he returned. He returned. He didn't just keep going. Thank God. He returned—this is wonderful that way the scripture says it, in verse fifteen, it says: "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." So, number one, he returned to who? He returned to the Lord. He made sure it wasn't just a casual thing. "I need to make sure that God knows I am thankful." Number two was how he came to God. That he turned to God and said thank you... Number two is how he thanked Him. We're going to hold that point for just a bit. We're going to go on a little bit, and come back and address that.

Now, we're going to go to another Scripture, to the Book of Ezra, chapter 3, verse 11:

Ezra 3:11-13 *And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. But many of the*

priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

So, here it says that they sang praises and gave thanks unto God. Why? Why did they do that? The Scripture says, for He was good to them, and they knew that His mercy endured forever. So, they gave thanks and praise to God for, to them, He was good and His mercy endured forever. So, that leads to the question, of course—it always has to lead to something; it's not just something that sits there, stationary, it sits on the shelf, button it up, close it, I won't have to use it, but it's a really nice decoration back there—it begs the question, to make us say for what we are thankful to God for. They thanked Him, because He's good and His mercy endures forever. So, it moves right on over to us, and what we thank God for. God is looking for why we thank God, because that builds the relationship that we have with God. That builds a relationship with God. This is part of God's value system. This is another thing that God values. Last week we mentioned that God values love; it's part of His value system. There's many values that we have. God shows us that he values love, and He shows us, this week, that He values the giving of thanks.

Now, if I could just make a point, here, if we were to go on, we would see that some of them were praising God for what He was doing. It had to be the young ones, because the ancient ones weren't praising God for what He was doing, but the younger ones were praising God for what they saw Him doing right now; for what was going on right now. But the ancient ones, the elder ones, the ones who had been around for a long time, they began to weep, and to cry, because they remembered what the glory of that first Temple was like. They began to cry about the whole thing. Now, when we had the opportunity to go to Israel—it was wonderful; I got so much out of that trip. I'm looking forward to making another one sometime—when we went to Israel, we went to one of these little places—we went to a lot of museums and a lot of sights—one of the places that we went to was a place where they went to show us about the building of the Temple. They had this whole exposé. It was wonderful that they told us all this stuff, but it was coming so fast and so furious—my little mind wasn't used to trying to hold onto all that information. It was great to be exercised in that way. What they showed us was a couple of pictures. One of the pictures that they showed us was Solomon's Temple. Solomon's Temple was built in a time when Israel was rich. When Israel was rich, they had a lot of showbread; they had plenty of oil for the candles. They had many offerings and sacrifices that they would do at the altar when Israel was rich. They had another picture there: they had a picture of *after* Israel went into captivity, which this is, here, in the book of Ezra. In this picture, of course, they were in captivity, they did not have a lot of money. They were poor; they were broke, if you will. At this time, if you were to look at the temple, you would see that they had just enough. Just enough oil for the lamps. They had just enough showbread inside the Temple. They had just enough offerings for oblations. They had just enough; they didn't have a period of riches. It says here that the older ones, the elder ones, they remembered, so they couldn't help but compare. They couldn't help but compare the old and what used to be, with the new and what is. There's a lesson in here for that.

So we see, all at the same time, in the Book of Ezra, all at the same time, as they laid the foundation, we've got two different things going on here: We've got the voice of those who are shouting and praising God for what He's doing, and we've got the voice of those who are weeping for what God used to do. Yes, yes, yes, we have a lesson here.

Now, in our ministry, here, we've had a lot of changes, as ministries are supposed to adopt and change. The Gospel stays the same, but ministries change. Administrations change. The leadership may change. The Word of God standeth sure; it *never* changes. Not a dot, not a tittle, not a slant, not a comma; it never changes, as our God never changes. But, as time changes, maybe the ways that the ministry reach people, maybe that changes. Maybe that modifies a little bit. Maybe some of the things that people are

accustomed to—you know, if you had gone back a hundred and fifty years and talk to them about putting advertising in newspapers, and putting it on TV, and the social media thing, and the cell phones; they'd have looked at you like, "I don't have a clue what you're talking about, and, you know what? I don't know if you're possessed or not. Don't bring that mess up in here." Yeah, if you were to go back two hundred years—if you were to go back a thousand years, and talk to them about a printing press, they'd be like, "A what? We write things by hand. We don't have typewriters, computers... We don't have speech to text. We don't have that stuff." So, we see that administrations and methodologies, they may change, but the Word of God has not. So, saying that, sometimes, in ministries, the ones who have been around for a while might get caught up a little bit, and say, "You know, somebody is praising and thanking Him for what's going on now," and they turn round and say, "But it ain't like it used to be. You should have seen it way back when I was younger." If I'm honest, I've been caught up in that spirit a time or two. It's good to have memorials, but you don't live in your memorials. They are reminders, to get you going, that God did it before, and God will do it again.

So, as we talk about the elders, and the ancient people, and how they might say, "Oh, if only you had seen it then!" as if God could only do it one way. This attitude this position, can actually stop the observing of a blessing that God is binging now. In fact, it can restrict, or altogether stop God from moving, if we take our faith out of our diminished hearts. It can have the effect of where people say, "Well, you know, you make me to feel like, I don't know, maybe, maybe, I'm just out of time." So, we see that, many times, God's people have that attitude—it is a matter of putting our own limitations, if you will, maybe our own expectations, and maybe my own interpretation of what God is doing, and not giving freedom to the Holy Spirit to do all that God wants to do. There is, there is a problem with this, when we start to put a mindset on what God is doing. I've seen it! You know what? Anybody who's been in the faith for a while, when somebody new comes along, you're going to say, "Hey, this is how you have to do it. You follow me and check me out. Do this the way that I do it. You follow me." "I've been around fifteen years," and somebody else says, "I've been around twenty-five years, so you follow me." As though God is restricted to that. God Almighty being held hostage by people who use *tenure* in God. As if God can't do a new thing. As if God can't do something that we don't even *know* what He's going to do. As if God can't power out a blessing that we would say, "Wow! I never imagined that!"

You know, when I—I've told this story before—when I was—I grew up in Baltimore, in an area where it was very ethno-centric; let me say it like that. We had our customs and traditions, but, one of the things that wasn't there was cheesecake. Cheesecake. So, here I was, eighteen years old; I'd heard about this phenomenon, cheesecake. I'd heard about it, and I went into the Navy, down in Orlando, Florida. "Why would anybody eat cake that tastes like cheese? Why would somebody do that? That just sounds nasty. That just sounds nasty. The people that do that—that's like eating liver!" So, anyway, there I was, just a little guy from Baltimore, Maryland in Orlando, Florida, and I'm going to tell you, Saints, I remember, I remember where I was standing the first time, when I had my first bite—I remember the scenario; I remember everything that was going on around me. There I was, coming from the Navy Exchange, right from the cafeteria part, where I could look over, and I could see Nuke School. It was my lunch time, and I could see the field where we played sports and everything, that's what was going on. I could see the register in the cafeteria, and I was standing up, and it cost me a quarter to have a little bite, and I thought, "Well, I'll try it out for a quarter." I remember the first time I had a bite of cheesecake. The first time. It was like my taste buds flew up out of my mouth. It was like they just went into an automatic crave. It was like they all started screaming; they didn't know what to do with themselves. Over my first bite of cheesecake. Yeah, I can remember; yeah. I'm being a little comical in this, but it's for a point. It's akin to the very first time—See, I didn't know how to—it is akin to the very first time that I accepted what God had for me. When I accepted Him at His Word, it is akin to that. You see, I had heard stories about, "You know, you can have a walk with God, and it could be something personal, and it could be something precious, and you could like it; you could love it!" I had heard stories about all that, but, I'll tell you the

truth, I never, ever knew it could be like this. People that were religious people, or Christians, they would point afar off, and they'd say, "Yeah, it could be like that!" and I'm like, "Oh, I'm sure it could, but, I don't know what you're talking about," and the very first time I accepted, the very first time I accepted God at His Word, trusted Him, and didn't put my expectations, my limitations, or my interpretations on what God's will is for my life, the very first time, oh, that is when I found out the truth. This love that he has, it's amazing! Didn't even know how to put that word in right. It's spectacular. The very first time you come into the knowledge and understanding and you feel the Holy Spirit go over you like a wave of glory. It's tremendous! It is awesome! The very first time. If I'd have known. If I'd have known... I mean, you could hear people talk about it, but, if I'd have known it was going to be like this, I would have sought for this sooner. "God, I need that!" I know, I saw it in a dream, I had a glimpse; somebody put the taste in my mouth. I had a whiff, and I need to have it in my life.

Part II: Unthankfulness

We need to say something about unthankfulness, because unthankfulness comes from somewhere, also. Unthankfulness begs to say, "Oh, what I got, I deserve," or, "What I got ain't enough," or, "What I got, I got it myself, anyway." Unthankfulness comes from someone. It comes from the one, the very first one who was unthankful in the first place, who said, when he saw the Giver of all good and perfect gifts, the Majestic, the Magnificent, the Awesome One, when he saw Him, he said, "I can be like that, and get that same glory for me. I'm going to be like that, and I'm going to be that prestigious," instead of bowing down and giving that glory and thankfulness unto God, he said, "I'm going to take some of that for myself." That is the institution known as pride. That is where pride comes from. Pride came from there, and is still going on. This is why he is the king over all the children of pride.

Psalms 138:6 *Though the LORD be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knoweth afar off.*

The proud He knoweth afar off. So, though the Lord is high, He has respect unto the lowly, to the humble. Pride brings an afar-off-ness; in other words, pride brings division; it brings distance between us and God. Pride brings distance between us and God.

There's another point, as far as being unthankful, that we have to go to: Sometimes God's blessings, and His deliverance, it's so smooth and so awesome, so simple, and pure, that you could almost forget that you had a problem in the first place. Did God ever do something for you, and you forget that you asked, because it's so wonderful—He doesn't throw fireworks up; He doesn't go ahead and just blast it across the radio or TV or nothing; God just does it.

You know, when I was—some months ago, I had a—I've had respiratory problems all my life, and one of these times, I was having a really bad breathing attack. One of the brothers, he's into the healthy stuff—I say that to my shame, because I don't do a whole lot of the healthy stuff; some people have a lot of mercy, they say, "Hey, look, you're being ignorant. Take this, and get better." So, this brother, he says, "You know what you should do? You should take this certain vitamin; it will help you out." I said, "Great. Wonderful. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yah, yeah, thanks." Anything to get the conversation over. He would say that every day of so, and, after several days, he said, "Hey, look, I need a ride. Can you give me a ride?" "Oh, sure, bro, sure, I'll give you a ride." Me still suffering with my little beginning of bronchitis respiratory ailment. I gave him a ride. Guess where he wanted to go? He wanted to the health food store. Okay, well, he does that kind of thing, because he's one of those healthy people. Anyway, he went in there, and he bought the bottle of vitamins, brought it out to the car, and said, "Here, try this." "All right, all right, all right, all right, all right." So, I did. I tried a couple that day. That was in the afternoon, and I took a

couple that night because that was what he said to do. Took a couple the next day, took a couple in the afternoon, and he said take a couple that night. The third day rolled around and I didn't take any. You know why I didn't take any? because I forgot I was sick. I forgot. That stuff worked so good, I forgot I was sick. I got to thinking, "I need to apologize, and thank that brother." Brother Ed, Brother Rick, thank you very much for looking past my stubborn thoughts and seeing my needs. Thank you very much for that. That is the same way, or a similar way, so many times, God brings deliverance, and answers, and anointings, so pure... Sometimes God can anoint you so wonderfully, you might even think it's you. You might think it's you, when God brought that blessing, just poured it out like syrup on pancakes. Just smothered. I'm sorry; I didn't eat breakfast this morning. I keep going back there... But God pours it out so wonderful, so complete, that it's like, "How could it be?" It didn't feel like an intrusion; it felt like strength to my bones. It felt like, in a sense, like it came from a well of water brimming up within me. Amen. That's how it felt. Yeah, sometimes He puts it on display for everybody to know. God don't have to prove nothing to nobody. He does it so that people might be anointed and blessed, but He doesn't have to; He's God.

So, when God blesses like that, the point is, we have to make sure that we are mindful of the blessings, so we turn to thank God and not forget what He has done for us.

Part III: There are different levels, different types of giving thanks unto God

***Psalms 119:10** With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.*

"With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments." So, we thank God for our food, and, if we don't, you know what? we should. Some of us, we thank God when He gives us a green light. Yeah. "He turned the light green. I'm in a rush. Thank You, God, for turning the light green. I'm on my way. Make another one green, please, because I'm running late." Some of us thank God for passing a test. "God, you helped me pass this test. I didn't know it going into it, but it seems something happened in there, and, all of the sudden, the answers were there. Ahhh." Some of us thank God for a roof over our heads, and a bed to sleep in. Some of us thank God that our rent was paid. Some of us thank God that we've got a job. Thank You, Lord, thank You. Some of us have thanked God over our favorite piece of pie or cake. Thank You, God. You know, I'm going to have to start eating before I come to church.

But, the question that we have here, is, from the Book of Acts, there was a man who was lame from birth, and they would lay him outside the gate—they would lay him there! Now, how do you think he thanked God when Peter and John were walking at the hour of prayer, they were walking into the Temple, and he looked, and the Bible says he asked an alms from them. The Bible says that Peter looked on him, and said, look on us. "Silver and gold, have I none, but such as I have, but such as I have, I give unto thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk." How do you think he thanked God when Peter reached down and grabbed him, and, the Bible says, his legs immediately received strength? How do you think he thanked God? He got up and said, "Oh, that felt good. Thank you, bros, I really appreciate that." Do you think that was the case? The Bible says that he, leaping and praising God, went into the Temple. Over and over, leaping and praising God. Woo! I believe he might have been doing a little bit of a moonwalk in there. He said, "Ha ha! Never before like this!" and he was shouting, "Thank You, thank You, thank You, thank You, thank You, thank You, Jesus!"

How do you think the blind man, the blind man thanked God. As he made his cry out, and the Bible says, the Lord made a clay of spittle and put it on his eyes, and the Bible says he went to the pool and washed. He went and washed, and the Bible says that he came forth seeing. How do think he thanked God? When they tried to take it away from him, they said, "This man is a devil; you need to Worship God,

and call him a devil.” Did he give it back? No the Bible says that he said, “Now this is a marvelous thing, what God has done for me. This is marvelous. When has it ever happened, since the beginning of time, that one who was born blind received his sight?” In other words, “You couldn’t do it; God did it!” “If this man were a sinner, he could do nothing. But, whereas once I was blind, now I see.”

How do you think it might have been for the man that had the devils? I don’t know about you, but sometimes you can get a spirit on your life. Did you ever get an angry spirit, just walking around angry for a while, saying, “I kind of knew it, but it’s kind of hard to get rid of.” I don’t really want to be around people; I hope nothing comes up, because, whooo! it’s going to get nasty. Maybe you might—just maybe—you might get a lazy spirit. A lazy spirit. “Don’t ask me to do nothing. Don’t knock on my door. Don’t send me a letter. Don’t come by. Don’t send anybody by. Don’t even shine a light in my window. Don’t throw rocks up here. Just don’t do it. I feel like I have to have some time off.” So, how do you think this man who, the Bible says, had legion, and everybody was afraid of him. It says he spent his time in the cemetery. Every time they would put chains on him, he would break them. But, the Bible says that when Jesus came along, He rebuked the spirits out of the man. Then that man would follow Jesus. How do you think he thanked Him? “Hey, Jesus, it’s been a long time, but I really appreciate that,” or, stretching his hands to Heaven, “Almighty God! Nobody but You! Nobody but You, Lord! I will follow You all the rest of my days.”

How do you think, how do you think Lazarus said thank You to God? Out of all the things to be delivered from, to be risen from the dead? Yeah. So, our point here is that we know each one of them has a connection with us. There are times that we don’t see things that we need to see, and God will reveal things to us. There are times when we might have a wrong spirit on us, and we can go to Jesus, and he can heal us of every one. There are times when we can’t walk, can’t even take another step, and the Lord provides strength. Each one of them has a connection with us. So, in wrapping up, the point here is, we have to be careful, we have to be careful not to give a cake or pie thank You to a open my blinded eyes, saved my soul, gave me strength to walk, raised me from the dead blessing. Amen? Let’s give the Lord a praise.

