



Spurgeon Baptist Association Of Churches

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Thanksgiving 2007

It is time for Thanksgiving. What that means to many people is time off from work and the opportunity to go spend time with family or simply go play games as they wish. To some people it is a time in history that some superstitious people thought that God helped some ancient people to survive some harsh conditions in a new land. To a few people Thanksgiving is a religious holiday. In Scripture giving thanks comes from a heart of gratitude that is expressed in words and lives intended to glorify the living God and it is to happen on a constant basis.

On the one hand not giving thanks is a sign of a person or a people under the judgment of God: "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21). A people not giving thanks are a people that have suppressed the truth about God and are being given over to a hardened heart. Giving thanks does God no good at all since no man can do any good for God and cannot serve Him with his hands. When a person gives thanks in reality it is a sign of a heart that God has softened and enlightened and so the person with gratitude in the heart expresses praise to the sovereign God of this universe. But let us not be deluded to thinking that God needs our thanksgiving.

Hebrews 12:28 teaches us that without gratitude (which is necessary to give thanks) there is no acceptable service to God: "Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe." We can see from Hebrews 13:15 that the sacrifice of praise to God is the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name: "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name." In other words, without gratitude and the giving of thanks there is no true worship or praise.

We must also not make the mistake of simply thinking that we should give God thanks because He has given us food and physical blessings. We must also be careful not just to say words of thanks to God for spiritual blessings. This would turn the giving of thanks into something of a mercenary activity. God gives us something and so we simply say "thank you" or something like that. We must understand that giving of thanks with gratitude is a heart that sees that God is the sovereign Creator and that humanity consists of nothing but sinful creatures. God only shows mercy and grace because of who He is. When God grants physical or spiritual mercies it is because He decides to do so based on His great name. Psalm 26:7 gives the heart of the issue: "That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving And declare all Your wonders." It is with thanksgiving that His wonders are declared. We should not simply

recite a few things that God has done that we think is to our benefit, but in thanksgiving declare the wonders and glories of our God and King.

Colossians 3:16 tells us that our praise should be done with thanksgiving: "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Colossians 3:17 continues the thought and tells us that "Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." This teaches us a couple of things that are missing in our present "worship" services. Larger congregations hire the finest of musicians and purchase the finest arrangements of music. But money cannot buy thankfulness of heart and there is no true worship apart from that. Psalm 42:4 has another insight which we tend to have backwards in our day: "For I used to go along with the throng *and* lead them in procession to the house of God, with the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival." True thanksgiving is with joy in and to God, not self.

If we are to have a time true thanksgiving this Thanksgiving, we must look to Scripture for instruction. If we are not truly thankful, it means that we have a hardened heart and are suppressing the truth about God. If we don't have true gratitude in our heart, we are not truly thankful. If we are not declaring the wonders of God from that gratitude, it is a self-centered thanksgiving. If we don't give thanks to the Father through Christ and that with joy, we are not offering biblical thanks. As with all other things that traditions have gobbled up, we must look in our hearts and realize that Thanksgiving can become nothing more than a time of idolatry of keeping certain practices with God's name tacked on. But then again, the "worship" services at the local church can be the same way. Our whole lives can be the same way. Perhaps we should spend time this Thanksgiving examining our hearts to see if we are truly giving thanks. Then we should spend time examining our hearts to see if we have thankful hearts. If we give true thanks, then we truly have something to be thankful about. It is the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Richard Smith

Associational News & Prayer Requests

Reformation Weekend at St. Francis, Kansas—Dr. Tom Nettles, Professor of Historical Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was with us to preach on *The Glory of God in the Face of Christ* and Danny Thompson of Fair Grove Baptist Church blessed us with his music. If you would like to have the Reformation Weekend conference CD set, please contact Tony Mattia at trinityb@wamego.net.

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