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Lakeland Hills Leader

Thanksgiving

By Chuck Richardson

Thanksgiving is my favorite American holiday. However, Thanksgiving, like all our holidays, has become no more than an overindulgent greed fest. Never has so much been given to so many ungrateful people such as we. We stuff ourselves with the bounties the Lord has provided then wallow in our misery without a thought of where these blessings come from.

As a Christian I try to reflect on the blessings I have received from God with a grateful heart, however as noted it is too easy to forget where they come from, and even still, this should not be a meditation only once a year, but a “Thanksgiving” of praise for all my blessings received throughout the year. Read Leviticus and you’ll notice that offerings on behalf of the people by the priest were given with thanksgiving (Leviticus 7), likewise the Christian is to continue in prayer with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6), so our worship is to be offered with thanksgiving. The dedication of our lives, because of our salvation needs to be with thanksgiving (Jonah 2:9; 2Corinthians 4:15). Moreover, thanksgiving is not coerced because God wants our expression to be from our free will (Leviticus 22:29; 1Thessalonians 3:6-9). And yet it is to be our expected service if we choose life everlasting (Colossians 3:17; 1Thessalonians 5:18).

The Hebrew writer sums it up this way: *Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. {Hebrews 13:15}* Since thanksgiving is a matter of heartfelt praise to God who has provided everything that pertains to life and godliness (2Peter 1:3), then let us count the ways we can express our thanksgiving and challenge ourselves this year to take account of all our blessings. I encourage all family members to make their list, taking turns offering prayers of thanksgiving to the Lord. To get things started let me offer three primary blessings worthy of our thanksgiving, that all of us share.

Salvation has to be at the top of our lists, all other thanksgivings are immeasurably greater because Jesus died, was buried, and then raised so we might now live forevermore (Romans 6). Who among us could not reflect a lifetime on the redemption plan God enacted for us. *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, {Ephesians 2:1} Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, {1Peter 1:3}*

Therefore, the second reflection of thanksgiving must be our own future **Resurrection**. *For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection... {Romans 6:5}* Take time to consider the image of our resurrection Paul paints for us in 1 Corinthians 15. A glorious body that will not corrupt will be given us to replace the decaying one. In our minds we usually skip to the idea of a heavenly reward and imagine ourselves interacting and looking as we are in this life. But the resurrected body is not only much more glorious than our flesh, it also has a more glorious purpose than the mundane and corrupting things of this life, no matter how noble and worthy they may be. I believe we don’t spend enough time thinking about the resurrection. *For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. {1Corinthians 15:21}*

The **Certainty of Our Hope** because God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), is our third reflection. Maybe, this last reflection of thanksgiving should be first, but here it is. The world runs about scared of the future, pretending there is no God to which we will give an answer (Romans 14:10; 2Corinthians 5:10). Since we are justified by faith, we can rejoice in hope. (Romans 5:1-5) And I know this because: *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* {Hebrews 11:1}

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No apostle ever wrote one line in Scripture with the specific purpose of lending encouragement to any person who is practicing sin - even if he does not know that what he is doing is a sin. It is one thing to be patient, sympathetic and understanding toward one who has not yet come to a knowledge of the truth on a given matter, but it is quite another thing to lend support, either moral or otherwise, to one whom we are convinced is practicing sin. There may be some individual matters about which there

will be differences of opinion, but even here the Christian must not compromise his own convictions. He should live up to what he has learned thus far, and he should encourage his fellow-Christian to do the same. Only as a Christian walks in the light that he has received does he have assurance that he will gain greater light.

- Walton Weaver, via Truth Commentary on Philippians, 189-190