

The Spiritual Benefits of Thanksgiving (Psalm 92:1-2)

This week many of us will be celebrating Thanksgiving with family and friends. I don't know about you, but Thanksgiving is one of my favorite times of the year. I love spending time with family and friends and I love doing so over thanksgiving dinner. But you know, thanksgiving is more than just a name for a holiday, it's a vital element for spiritual health and vitality.

In an article titled, "Four Keys to a Better Thanksgiving", Daniel Henderson wrote, "Maybe it's just me, but I am noticing that during these ever-difficult days in our nation, people are either responding with a deeper gratitude for the simple blessings of life or they are lapsing into grumbling about how tough things are. One thing is clear—it is still GOOD to give thanks to the Lord, even in 2021—especially in these very challenging times."

It truly is good to give thanks to the Lord. And not just during the holiday or when we perceive that things are going well, but all the time and especially in difficult times. In Psalm 92, the Psalmist wrote, "*It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High;*" (Psalm 92:1).

So why is it good to give thanks to the Lord? Certainly, it's good and right to give thanks to the Lord for no other reason but that God is worthy and deserves our praise and thanksgiving. But in addition to God being worthy of praise and thanksgiving, the bible makes it clear that in giving thanks, there are spiritual benefits for our souls.

So, because God is worthy and we're needy, I want to briefly share some of the benefits of giving thanks to the Lord, and also lead us to pray in thankfulness to the Lord.

1. Captures our attention

What are the benefits of giving thanks to the Lord? First of all, giving thanks **captures the focus of our attention**. Do you know that the

word “thank” stems from the Latin word *tongēre*. And the root *tong-* means “think.” In other words, in order to give thanks we must remember what we are forgetting and “think” about what we should be thankful for.

With this in mind, if you’re feeling discontent, dissatisfied or ungrateful, it could be that you’re failing to remember or “think” about what you should be thankful for, or you’re thinking wrongly because your focus is in the wrong place. Certainly there are difficult things that we all go through, but even in difficult times we can be thankful.

We can be thankful in all circumstances when we turn our attention to God and all that He’s done for us in Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:18). In our text this morning, we see that the Psalmist’s focus was on God, who he praised as the Most High. And the Psalmist turned his attention to God by declaring the steadfast love of the Lord every morning and by praising Him for His faithfulness every night (v.1-2).

O how we need to see that God is greater and higher than everything and everyone that we face. Where man rules, He overrules. We panic when we make our problems bigger than what they are. That’s not to say that we won’t ever have what we call big problems, but we must remember that there is no problem bigger than God. We must remember that when things seem to be out of our control, they are only out of OUR control, and not out of the control of God! And not only can we trust that there’s no problem bigger than God, but that God, the Most High cares for us. He cares so much that He sent His son to lay down His life to save us.

To be thankful we don’t have to ignore our problems or live in denial of them. But we must turn the focus of our attention to God. We must glimpse at our problems, but we must gaze upon God.

This brings us to a second benefit of giving thanks to the Lord.

2. Changes our attitude

When we thank the Lord not only does he **capture the focus of our attention**, but in doing so He **changes the fickleness of our attitudes**. Do you generally have an attitude of gratitude or do you often find yourself complaining and grumbling? There's a time for constructive criticism.

However, having a critical spirit and a complaining attitude can be an indication that something other than God has the primary attention of your mind and the affections of your heart.

Often an ungrateful heart is the result of playing the comparison game. When you play the comparison game, nothing will ever measure up to your expectations or satisfy your soul. But when your primary focus is on God and your ultimate satisfaction is found in His love for you in Christ, you will be easy to please. You will not take anything for granted. You will not only be thankful for God, but you will also be thankful for creation, for the sunshine, for the breath that you breathe and the people in your life.

There will be times when we lose sight of God's goodness all around us. And when this happens, our attitudes will become fickle and we can among other things become ungrateful. But in understanding that ungratefulness is a sign that something other than God has our primary attention, an ungrateful attitude can become like an alarm that alerts us to turn our attention back to God. Ungratefulness will turn to thankfulness when our whining turns to worship.

This brings us to a third benefit of giving thanks to the Lord.

3. Controls our altitude

Changing the focus of our attention through thanksgiving will change the fickleness of our attitude into an attitude of gratitude. And an attitude of gratitude will **control our altitude**. It's been said, "your attitude will determine your altitude." In other words, your attitude in life will impact how high you will climb or how low you will go in life. Ingratitude will not only hold you back and hold you down, but can

also rub off on those around you and hold them back. But a thankful heart will both lift you up, and also lift up those around you (Psalm 40:3).

As Daniel Henderson explained, “when we give thanks, we fix our expectation in the One whom we can trust for the next chapter of life. “Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future, and life is worth the living just because He lives.” If our unchanging God is good, and has been good – then He will be good with every step I take into the future.”

Notice that while highlighting the superiority of Christ and His redemptive accomplishments on our behalf, the author of Hebrews wrote, “*Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.*” Hebrews 13:15

So, let’s give thanks to the Lord this morning. Let’s bless His name and our souls in the congregation by offering thanksgiving to the Lord Most High. And because Jesus lives, no matter where we are today, we can offer the sacrifice of praise, that is the fruit of our lips that acknowledge His name. Because our unchanging God is good, and has been good – then He will be good with every step we take into the future. Let’s praise Him!

Reverence (Thanksgiving)

O Lord Most High, I thank you and praise you for _____

O Lord, although I’m going through _____, I praise you and thank you because I know _____

Response

Sin and bitterness of heart will effect your outlook. When your heart is defiled you will have a complaining Spirit rather than a grateful spirit. The glass will always be half empty to you.

Confess any bitterness or discontent and surrender to God to use you to spread a spirit of joyfulness and an attitude of gratitude. And ask God to cleanse your heart so that you might have the right view of life and a hopeful outlook of your future.

Request

Let's pray for power to demonstrate and declare God's steadfast love and faithfulness this holiday season.

Let's pray for people in our lives whose hearts and minds are blinded and can't see the goodness of the Lord. Pray that their eyes would be open to the grace of Christ and that His goodness would lead them to repentance and salvation.

Readiness

O Lord, Most High, keep us from the temptation to murmur and complain in this perverse world, but instead let us learn through Christ to be content and to give thanks in every situation to the glory of His name.