

Grace Communication 4 - Thanksgiving Communication

a study for the Gulf Coast Baptist Church Bible Institute

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Introduction

The Godhead is working to reveal the riches of His grace in and through the life of the believer (Eph 1:7, 2:7, Col 1:27). There are times where this working brings trials and tribulations in this life. Sometimes troubles come in the form of an individual who is particularly trying for a believer. The believer can be assured though, that God is working for His own glory and the believer's benefit (Rom 8:28). The believer has a choice on how to respond to this working, he can complain or be grateful. Gratefulness is a sign that the believer is spirit-filled (Eph 5:20). This spiritual state should be the default state and brings with it definite benefits for the believer.

Definition

Thanksgiving is a communication with God in which gratitude for past, present, and future benefits is expressed. This should be the main emphasis of our communication with the Godhead. It is in response to the actions of the Godhead. The Greek word Eucharista is found 15 times in noun form and 39 in verb form in the New Testament.

ευχαριστα Thanksgiving expressing gratitude for a benefit that God has provided.

Parameters of Thanksgiving

Thanks should be given at all times (Eph 5:20). Thanks should be given for all things. Thanks should be given for all men (1 Tim 2:1). Thanks should be given in all things (1 Thess 5:18).

Consider the example of Christ (Mat 15:36, Mat 26:27, Luke 10:21, John 11:41). In each of these extremes, Christ found it appropriate to give thanks to the Father.

A large part of the believer's future will include thanksgiving (Rev 4:9, 7:12, 11:17). In Romans 1, Paul tells of the society (most likely Babel) who knew God but were not grateful in their knowledge of God and failed. This lack of gratefulness led to other dysfunctionality and ultimately led to God's judgment as God abandoned them.

The Spiritual Thermometer

Along with praise and submission, gratefulness is an indicator of spirituality (Eph 5:18-21). The carnal believer does not recognize God's working in His life. He will murmur and complain. Seeing the connection of submission, praise (melodic heart), and gratefulness in these passages to a believer that is being filled with the spirit, putting on the new man, and giving the proper sacrifices of the believer priest is important. They are outward characteristics of what is happening with the believer inwardly. Much like a thermometer or a warm brow will notify of a fever, these characteristics (or the lack thereof) can often notify others of the spiritual condition of the believer at that time. For instance, a sense of entitlement, the act of complaining, a critical spirit, a tendency to focus on the negative instead of the positive, these can all be revelatory of a

carnal attitude in the believer. While on the other hand, the grateful heart, is a characteristic that the Spirit has been given control by this particular individual.

Benefits of Gratefulness/Spirituality

As a characteristic of the spiritual believer, a connection can be made to certain benefits that accompany spirit control of the believer. The spiritual believer is described as “rooted, built up, and stablished” in Colossians 2 . This believer is stable, provided for both spiritually and physically, growing in the faith, and productive in his ministry.

Later in that same chapter, Paul describes the believer as Complete in Him. This believer is lacking nothing. Consider the fact that all believers are actually in this state, but it is the grateful/spiritual believer that is living as though it is true. The carnal believer has believed the lie that there is something lacking, something somehow wrong with his circumstances. God has provided all the believer needs, in fact has blessed the believer with all spiritual blessings, but the believer often does not keep this in view, allowing circumstances to distract him from God’s working.

Paul tells the Corinthians that the believer who is spiritual judgeth all things (1 Cor 2:15). A.T. Robertson describes this benefit in this way: The spiritual man (*ho pneumatikos*) is qualified to sift, to examine, to decide rightly, because he has the eyes of his heart enlightened (Eph 1:18) and is no longer blinded by the god of this world (2Co_4:4). When the believer is complaining, or disgruntled, he will not have this ability.

When Christ ascended on high, He gave gifts to the Church in the form of service gifts. (Eph 4:8,12) Many of these gifts were of a temporary nature and have ceased in their operations, but there are still 11 gifts that can be directed by the Church towards others. These gifts are functional to the building up of the saints that can be experienced by the spiritual believer mentioned back in the second chapter of Colossians. The exercising of these gifts is one of the purposes of the assembly of the believers. To miss out on the benefits provided by the performance of and receipt of these gifts would be a loss indeed. When the believer is carnal, lacking the mindset of worshiping at the heavenly altar, lacking the framing of the mind on things above, lacking the order of his life around love, he will not participate in the supernatural nature of these gifts. He will operate in his own talents, but not be directing his gift towards the Body.

The grateful/spiritual believer has an understanding of the desired will of God (Col 1:9-12). In order to find the abundant life that God intends for each believer, this will must be discovered. The grateful believer lives in his inheritance while on this earth in the here and now. Finding God’s Desired Will (and directing faith towards it) is integral to living out his position with power.

Recipients of Thanksgiving

While most communication is to be directed at the Father, it is appropriate to direct Thanksgiving to each member of the Trinity, a great majority of revelation has communication being directed at God the Father. However, Paul directed thanksgiving towards the second person of the trinity, Jesus Christ (1 Tim 1:12, Eph 5:20).

It is appropriate to be grateful to the Spirit who aids in worship (Rom 8:28-29). Worship should also be made by means of the Spirit (Jude 20).

Conclusion

The believer cannot always see what God is doing in his life. There are just too many variables to consider what the Godhead is fully aware of. The believer should direct faith towards God, trusting the fact that He is in control, even when He allows “bad” circumstances to enter his life. The believer should not be in such a hurry to exit circumstances that God has allowed. A request for strength to endure is more appropriate. God’s wisdom has placed the believer in these situations and they are being used for God’s glory and the benefit of the believer.