Gratitude And Thanksgiving
Deuteronomy 28

There are over 400 passages in the Bible that mention thanksgiving or gratitude. There are two big themes that emerge from these verses. First, God wants gratitude to be the primary motivation behind everything we do. We need to live thankful lives. Gratitude is far more than just saying, "Thank you," every so often. Gratitude is a constant mindset. He wants us to do everything out of thanksgiving and out of gratitude. The second theme is that God rewards gratitude with a long list of blessings and benefits. When we live with a continual attitude of gratitude or thanksgiving, God blesses, because God blesses grateful hearts. There are benefits to gratitude.

- God's Will and Blessings

Deuteronomy 28:1-8 talks about the importance of obedience and the blessing that God gives when we obey his commands. One of the dangers of Christianity is to take the blessings of God for granted. If the stars come out only once a year, everybody would stay up all night to see them. We see the stars so often that we don't bother to look at them anymore. I fear we sometimes have gotten accustomed to our blessings that we do not give thanks to God for them. Do you know that all of the feasts and festivals of Israel were set times for thanksgiving?

"*If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come on you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven. The Lord will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The Lord your God will bless you in the land he is giving you.*" Deuteronomy 28:1-8

The Lord will bless you in the city and in the country.
He will bless your children.
The Lord will bless your crops and your livestock.
The Lord will bless your harvest and the food you prepare.
The Lord will bless you wherever you go.
The Lord will even defeat your enemies when they attack you.
The Lord will send His blessing on all you put your hand to and bless everything you do.

God promises these blessings to us if we obey Him. If we follow His instructions for life, He says, "I'm going to bless everything you do."

Five different times in scripture, God tells us that gratitude is more than just saying, "Thank you," every so often. Gratitude is a constant mindset of thankfulness. It's an attitude of gratitude that you make your lifestyle. God wants us to respond to everything that happens in our lives with an attitude of gratitude.

Few things transform a human life like giving thanks. Scripture calls us to it. Science confirms it.

The Bible overflows with invitations to thanksgiving:

"*Always give thanks to God the Father for everything…*" Ephesians 5:20

"*Live your lives in Him… overflowing with thankfulness.*" Colossians 2:6-7

"*Always be thankful in all circumstances for this is God's will for you.*" 1 Thessalonians 5:18

"*Always be thankful in all circumstances*," covers everything. There are no loopholes. God says if you obey that, "I'm going to bless you in every area of your life." He says, "This is God's will for you for your life." People are always saying, "I want to know God's will for my life." God's will is that you are always grateful. You're always thankful. You're always full of gratitude.

- The Blessings of Gratitude

When God wants to help us do the right thing, He always attaches a benefit or blessings to doing it. Both scripture and scientific studies show that having a mindset of gratitude yields great blessings.

- Gratitude Improves Your Brain And Your Physical Health.

Doctors say that gratitude is the healthiest human emotion. It improves both your brain and your physical health.

- Gratitude Creates Happiness.

If you want to be happy, develop a thankful heart. The happiest people are those who are the most grateful.

- Gratitude Helps You Sleep Better.

The Bible told us this thousands of years ago in the book of Proverbs.

"*When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.*" Proverbs 3:24

- Gratitude Is The Antidote To Toxic Emotions.

Gratitude defeats things like worry, depression, anger, and fear. You can't be grateful and worried at the same time or depressed and grateful the same time. It defeats those toxic emotions.

- Gratitude Improves Relationships.

You want better relationships? Become a more grateful man or woman. You know what, if you express gratitude more to your spouse, you'd have a whole lot less conflict.

- Gratitude Opens The Door To People And To Other Opportunities.

When you express gratitude to people, you make friends. It opens doors and gives you opportunities.

- Giving Back To God

At Thanksgiving, more than any other time, we give thanks by giving back to God. We give thanks by giving. We give back the first part of what He has given to us. Let's look at some scripture on this.

Psalm 54:6 says, "*I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you; I will praise your name, LORD, for it is good*." That's a thanksgiving offering. Next week we will talk about a thanksgiving song but the Bible talks about a thanksgiving offering, an offering where we give to give thanks.

About 400 years ago, a group of Christians who were being persecuted for their faith, left Europe and moved to North America in order to establish a colony that allowed religious liberty so they could worship God freely. Those original people who came 400 years ago from Europe were called the Pilgrims. 400 years ago, they established, with the native Americans, a Thanksgiving Day in the fall to give thanks to God. That's where Thanksgiving Day got started.

A lot of nations have Thanksgiving Days. 150 years later after the Pilgrims, America's first president, George

Washington, at the urging of Congress, created the first national Thanksgiving holiday. You should read Washington's original proclamation. It's impressive what the President of the United States said about the necessity of being grateful to God.

It's pretty clear that 400 years ago at the first modern Thanksgiving and then 150 years later, the first Thanksgiving holiday for our nation there was a desire to thank God. 3,000 years before that, God had told the nation of Israel to establish a thanksgiving festival every year called the Feast of Weeks. They were to celebrate God's goodness, and they were to express their gratitude to God by bringing Him a special thanksgiving offering.

It is recorded in Deuteronomy 16:10-11, "*And you shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with a freewill offering that you give in proportion to how the LORD your God has blessed you, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in the place He will choose as a dwelling for His Name—you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levite within your gates, as well as the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widows among you.*"

In the original Thanksgiving Day, they were to bring a gift of thanksgiving to the place of Thanksgiving. That's the Tabernacle, the place where they worshiped. This thanksgiving offering has been practiced by God's people for thousands and thousands of years.

In Psalm 116:17, King David says, "*I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD*."

The thanksgiving offering is mentioned many times in scripture. In Psalm 50:23, God says, "*Those who sacrifice thank offerings honor me, and to the blameless I will show my salvation.*"

Anytime we give an offering to God, it actually represents three kinds of gratitude: past, present, and future. When I give an offering to God, it represents that I'm grateful for God's blessing in the past, I'm grateful for God's blessing today, and I'm grateful in faith for God's continued blessing in the future. I thank Him for the past, I thank Him for today, and I thank Him that He's going to keep taking care of me in the future. Three kinds of gratitude.

The question for us is, "What kind of offering are we to bring to show our gratitude to God?" The Bible says over and over again that we are to give God the first part of our income. Not the leftovers. Some people say, "I pay all my bills and whatever's left, I'll give to God." We are to put God first in our finances. God knows this is a step of faith, putting Him first, which is why He tells us to do it. Because it's a step of faith. God is more interested in our faith. He certainly doesn't need our money. God doesn't need our money. He owns it all. The money you have isn't really yours. It was somebody else's before yours, it's yours right now on loan, and it will be loaned to somebody else later. God just wants to know if you trust Him.

With what God gives us, He also attaches a promise. There are more promises in the Bible related to giving back to God than any other promises in the scripture.

Proverbs 3:9-10 says, "*Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine."*

There is a premise, "*Honor the LORD.*" There is a promise, "*your barns will be filled with plenty*."

God says giving Him an offering is not just an act of gratitude. It's an act of faith. God always honors faith. He promises to bless you back. There are more promises in the Bible attached to giving and generosity than any other subject. Why? Because God wants His children to be like Him. God is a generous God. Everything you have in life is a gift of God's love. God is the best giver. "*God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son*." You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving. God so loved that He gave. If you love God, you're going to give; and if you love others, you're going to give.

God's promise is you're going to get back more than you could possibly give to Him. In Luke 6:38, Jesus expanded and extended the promise we just read in Proverbs 3 by saying, "*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure,*

pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

"*Pressed down, shaken together*" means "*to make room for more and running over*." If have a bag of beans and keep shaking it down, it can hold more. Whatever measure you use in giving, large or small, "it will be used to measure what is given back to you." Do you believe that verse? Do you believe that, if you give, God will give back more to you? How much do you trust God?

I've never understood why people trust Jesus to forgive their sins and save their souls and take them to heaven, but they don't trust the same Jesus with their finances and the promises He makes about that? It makes no sense at all. If you can't trust Jesus with your finances, why do you trust Him for your salvation? This is a faith issue. How much do you trust God?

Giving the first part back to God is called the principle of tithing.

Tithing is the old English word that means 10%. It's not 12%, it's not 20, it's not 1%. Tithing means the first 10%. If I make $10, the first dollar goes back to God. If I make $100, the first $10 go back to God. First, we give the first 10% of our income back to God in faith and gratitude, and then He blesses the other 90%.

God is not talking to them about their finances because He wanted something <u>from</u> them.
He was talking to them about their finances because He wanted something <u>for</u> them.

"*A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. Every tithe of the herd and flock - every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod - will be holy to the LORD.*" Leviticus 27:29-30

"<u>If</u> only you listen obediently to the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all this commandment which I am commanding you today, <u>then</u> the LORD your God will bless you as He has promised you, and you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; and you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you."
Deuteronomy 15:5-6

God's desire was for them to experience His best blessing. You have to put God first in your family, your faith, and your finances. You have to thank God for how He has blessed you, and your family, and your finances. When I lift up the fruit fruits to the Lord, I'm acknowledging that it's not mine, and it came from Him. If you have never given your life to Jesus Christ, I challenge you to make that decision today.

You may say, "God's first in my life." There are two things more than any other that show that. Our calendar and our checkbook. The way you spend your time and the way you spend your money tells what's really first in our life.

One of the greatest promises in the Bible is Malachi 3:10, "*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,*" *says the LORD Almighty,* "*and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.*"

Tithe is when you bring the first 10% on the first day of the week (Sunday) as a demonstration that God is first. As an act of worship, you bring it to my storehouse, says the Lord. You don't give your tithe to your sister or to some nice organization out there. It belongs to God. It goes to His storehouse. It says, "*So there'll be food in My house.*"

Then God says, "*Test me in this.*" God says, "Test Me. Test Me and see if I won't throw open the floodgates to heaven and pour out so much blessing, you won't have enough room for it." God says this is one of the ways you can prove He exists.

1. **The Priority The Lord Gave The Tithe**

"*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse.*" Malachi 3:10

We are to "bring the tithe to the storehouse," not give it because it belongs to God. It is not our money. It is God's money, and we are returning what is His.

- Abraham Started It.

"*…Abraham gave tithes of all*." Genesis 14:18-20

- Through Moses, God Made It A Law.

"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or the fruit of the tree, it is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord." Leviticus 27:30

- Malachi Commanded It.

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house." Malachi 3:8-10

- Jesus believed it.

"*You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness*." Matthew 23:23

"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Mark 12:17

The biggest givers to church, on average, are people ages 65-74 (5.5 % of their income).
The smallest givers are those ages 18-24 (1.2 % of their income).
- U.S. News and World Report

- Paul continued it.

"Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay aside in store as God hath prospered him, so that there need be no gatherings when I come." 1 Corinthians 16:2

You are missing the blessing if you ignore the Lord's command to tithe.

2. The Penalty For Failure To Tithe

"You are under a curse - your whole nation - because you are robbing me." Malachi 3:9

The word for "cursed" means "a removal of God's blessings."

They were missing the blessing because they had buried the Lord's command to tithe.

3. The Purpose Of The Tithe

The purpose of the tithe is to make you aware that God is our TOTAL SOURCE.

"*You shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and your flock, so that you may learn to reverence the LORD your God always.*" Deuteronomy 14:23

- When we tithe, we acknowledge God's dominion.

- When we tithe, we acknowledge our blessings are from God.

"Blessed are You, O LORD God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone. Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You." 1 Chronicles 29:10-14

What we put into one of Your hands we simply took from the other.

- When We Tithe, It Teaches Us To Always Put God First In Our Lives.

You can do anything you want to do with a dollar bill.

- The Tithe Is God's Way Of Financing The Work Of His Church.

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house." Malachi 3:10

It is to see His kingdom expanded.
Missionaries could go out.
New churches could be planted.
Human needs could be met.

First, it was for a spiritual ministry. It was used to feed the tribe of Levi and the priests of Aaron. This would be the equivalent of the pastor and the staff. It was used to feed the prophets. This would be the equivalent today of taking care of missionaries and evangelists.

Then, it fulfilled a social ministry. It was used to feed the Hebrew widows and the orphans living within the city. In other words, it met benevolent needs.

It was for a saving ministry. Because it was used to feed and reach the orphans and the widows of the Gentiles, it reached people who were lost.

Those are the three basic ministries of the church today. There is the spiritual ministry of taking care of God's ministers. There is the social ministry of taking care of the hungry and the poor. There is the saving ministry of seeing men and women who are lost come to God and be saved. All of this ministry is to be financed by the tithe.

"*There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need*." Acts 4:34-35

4. The Promises Of The Tithe

The faithfulness in tithing is rewarded.

"And see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it." Malachi 3:10

- The Benefits Of Tithing

The result is plenty, protection, and proclamation.

- Plenty

"Test me and see if I will throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." Malachi 3:10

God says your part is to prove, and God's part is to pour. God says, "Test me. See if I'm the real thing. See if I'm genuine." God said that if we will open our wallets, He will open up His windows. Your investment brings God's involvement.

"*Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine*." Proverbs 3:9-10

- Protection

"I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the Lord Almighty. Malachi 3:11

"*When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.*" Isaiah 59:19

- Proclamation

"Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty. Malachi 3:12

90% that is blessed by God will go further than 100% that is not blessed by God.

The tithe teaches us to trust God. God's people give on the basis of the promises of God.

Can you trust God?

Studies show that, as income increases, the percentage of giving decreases.

The average person in America gives 3.1% of their income.
Those earning under $10,000 give 5.2% of their income.
Those earning $200,000 give .07% - less than one percent.

We live in a world that is confused about the benefits of giving. We often are willing takers of all God has to offer, but are unwilling to give to God that which He requires of us.