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Thankfulness - A Key to the Christian Life



By Steven J. Hogan

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Thankfulness. Gratitude. Appreciation. Being thankful is incredibly important for every Christian. It's a character quality that is directly related to being a joyful, contented, growing, and fruitful believer. Sadly, many Christians are not very thankful, resulting in problems in their personal lives, relationships, and with God Himself.

The word thankful is from the Greek word *"charis"*, and is translated grace. A thankful person realizes that who he is, what he possesses, and what he has accomplished are, ultimately, not from himself or others, but from God and His grace. John the Baptist said, *"A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven"* (John 3:27). Indeed, God is the source of all that is good. *"Every good thing given, and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of*

lights." James 1:17

A thankful person is God-focused. He is looking at God and not looking at himself. It's so easy to be self-centered, but we must be God-centered, thinking about God and affected by Him. Life is difficult when we think about our own lives, consumed with our wants and desires, but is a blessing when we think about God and His purposes and glory. And being thankful helps us get our eyes off of self and onto God. *"Thus, I have seen You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and glory."* Psalm 63:4

A thankful person is humble, for he realizes he is not self-made. He is not proud, thinking in his heart, *"Look at me and what I have done."* He knows God is working in his life, that Christ is praying for him, and that the Spirit is sanctifying him. Paul said, *"I thank Christ Jesus my Lord who has strengthened me"* (1 Tim. 1:12). He also said, *"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift"* (2 Cor. 9:15). A thankful person knows he does not deserve anything good, especially the gift of salvation. He understands he is a sinner, and that it is only by God's grace that he received His mercy and forgiveness and is wholly and forever righteous before Him.

A thankful Christian knows that God is involved in his life, and that what happens is God's will. *"In everything give thanks for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"* (1 Thess. 5:18). A grateful person thanks God for the past – for yesterday, for what happened 30, 50, or 70 years ago, and for everything in between. Thankfulness is an essential key to rightly processing the past. If you are not thankful for the people, events, and trials of yesteryear, then you will usually be more angry and bitter, you will tend to worry, grumble, and complain, and have less faith.

A thankful person realizes that God is sovereign, and when something happens that in itself is bad, he is still thankful. He knows God causes

all things to work together for God's glory and for his good. A thankful believer is thankful for everything because He knows God is always loving. A thankful person, seeing God's work in his life, family, and church, and in the world around Him, expresses gratitude to God – He gives Him all the credit and glory. *"Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart… Great are the works of the Lord; they are studied by all who delight in them. Splendid and majestic is His work."* Psalm 92:1-3

God wants you to be thankful for your entire life, and for everything in your life – creation, food, clothing, shelter, children, the church, trials, friends, finances, your job, your car, health, sickness, the weather, persecution, leaders, the country, for what's happening in the world, etc. Be thankful for God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, and eternal life, that you eternally know God in a personal way. Be thankful that God is holy, just, wise, good, powerful, forgiving, omniscient, faithful, and sovereign. Be thankful that God talks to you through His word. Be thankful that He has a plan for your life, is using you for His purposes, will bring you to heaven, and be with you forever.

Here are some of my favorite verses on being thankful, and a brief thought on each one. A much longer list of over 80 verses is given in my latest article.

* 1 Chronicles 23:30 **–** *"They are to stand every morning* ***to thank and to praise the Lord****, and likewise at evening."* You are to daily and consistently give thanks to God.
* Psalm 9:1 – *"I will* ***give thanks to the LORD*** *with all my heart."* You are to excitedly and wholeheartedly give thanks to God.
* Psalm 28:7 – *"The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; therefore, my heart exults, and with my song* ***I shall thank Him****."* Thank God for the strength He gives you to live for Him.

* Psalm 100:4a – ***“Enter His gates with thanksgiving*** *and His courts with praise.”* Approach God with thanksgiving. When you get time with God, don’t start off by asking Him for things, but rather, thank Him for what He has already done. Your praise for God often flows from thankfulness.
* Psalm 100:4b-5 – *“**Give thanks to God**, bless His name. For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations.”* Thank God that He is good, loving, and faithful.
* Psalm 108:3 – ***“I will give thanks to You O LORD****, among the peoples, and I will sing praises to You among the nations.”* Giving thanks is not just a personal thing, but is to be also done in public.

* Psalm 119:62 – “*At midnight I shall rise **to give thanks to You** because of your righteous ordinances.”* Thank God that He gives you His word, that He speaks truth, and gives you commands and promises.
* Psalm 147:7 – ***“Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving****, sing praises to our God on the lyre.”* The songs you sing are often an expression of thankfulness, a means of being thankful to God.
* Daniel 2:23 – *“To You, O God of my fathers, **I give thanks** and praise, for You have given me wisdom and power.”* Be thankful to God for the wisdom and strength that He alone gives you.

* Daniel 6:10 – *“He… continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and **giving thanks before his God**, as he had been doing previously.”* Daniel is a good example of one who is thankful.
* Matthew 26:27 – ***“When He had taken a cup and given thanks****, He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you.’”* Communion is to be a time when you thank God and Jesus for your salvation.
* John 6:11 – ***“Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks****, He distributed to those who were seated.”* Thank God for the food He gives you, as well as for other necessities in life.

* Acts 24:2-3 – *“Since we have through you attained much peace… we acknowledge this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix,* ***with all thankfulness.”*** It’s good to thank God for the blessings

provided to you through the government.
* Acts 28:15 – *"When Paul saw them,* ***he thanked God and took courage."*** Thanking God for the lives of Christians results in courage, in being encouraged.
* Romans 16:3-4 – *"Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks,* ***to whom not only do I give thanks****, but also all the churches of the Gentiles."* Paul was thankful for all Christians, especially those who were workers and warriors in the faith.

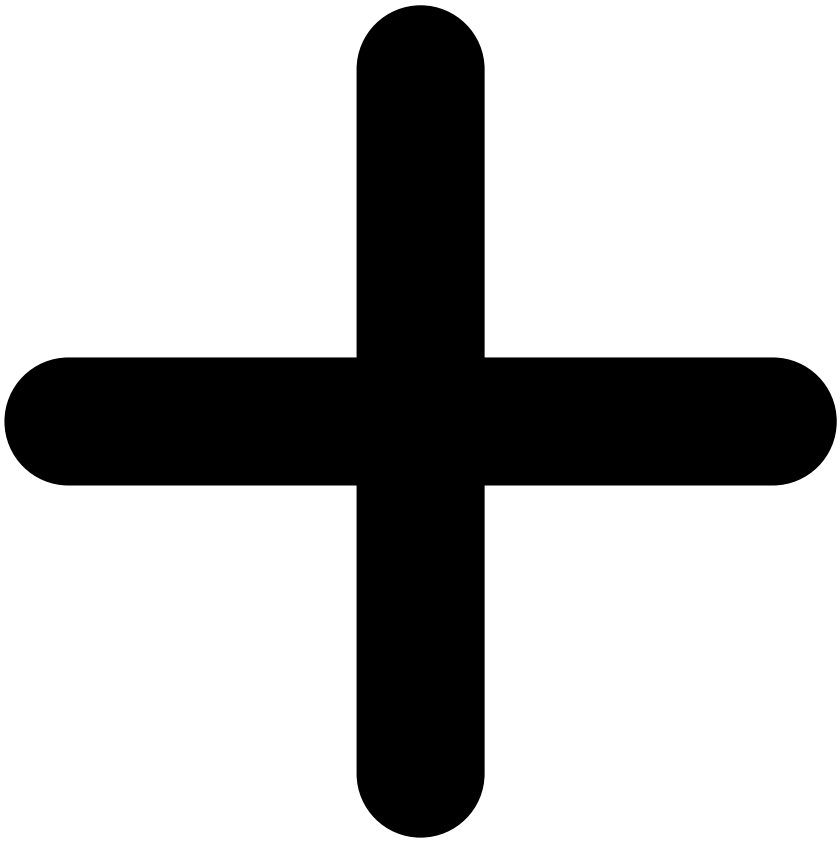
* 1 Corinthians 15:57 – ***"Thanks be to God,*** *who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Seeing the victories that God gives you should result in thankfulness.
* 2 Corinthians 4:15-16 – *"All things are for our sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause* ***the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God."*** Witnessing the spread of God's grace in the lives of believers is a good reason to be thankful and give glory to God.
* Ephesians 5:4 – *"There must be no filthiness and silly talk, or course jesting, which are not fitting,* ***but rather giving of thanks."*** Not being thankful may lead to speech that is not godly or edifying.

* Philippians 4:16-17 – *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by* ***prayer and supplication with thanksgiving,*** *let your requests be made known to God."* A key to believing prayer is being thankful to God for who He is and for what He has done.
* Colossians 2:6-7 – *"Walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and* ***overflowing with gratitude."*** A key to spiritual growth is not just being thankful, but being filled and overflowing with thankfulness.
* Colossians 3:17 – *"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,* ***giving thanks through Him to God the Father."*** All that you do for God is to be done by the power of Christ and for the purpose of Christ, and with thanks to God that you can serve Him.

* 1 Thessalonians 2-3 – ***“We give thanks to God*** *always for all of you… constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Thank God for all Christians, especially when you see their faith, hope, and love, a result of His work in their lives.

* 1 Timothy 2:1 – *“I urge that entreaties and prayers,* ***petitions and thanksgivings be made*** *on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority.”* Be thankful for all people, even unbelievers, knowing that God is using them for His purposes and glory.
* Revelation 4:19 – *“… the living creatures* ***give glory and honor and thanks to Him*** *who sits on the throne.”* All spiritual beings in heaven are faithfully and forever giving thanks and glory to God.
* Revelation 11:17 – ***“We give you thanks, O Lord God****, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.”* In the next age, we will all give thanks to God, for it is then that we will see Jesus Christ reigning on this earth.

I pray that you grow in being more thankful. It’s what God wants for His sake, your sake, and the sake of others. I cannot stress enough the spiritual and eternal benefit of being thankful. It’s a critical key to being a success for God in these end-times and during the great tribulation. *“O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever”* (Ps. 30:12). *“I will give You thanks in the great congregation; I will praise You among a mighty throng”* (Ps. 35:18). *“I will praise the name of God with song and magnify Him with thanksgiving.”* Psalm 69:30





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