

Your Thanksgiving List
Psalm 107:1-9

Every year about this time we are asked "what's on your Christmas List?" It is a simple question from someone who would like to honor you with a gift at Christmastime . . . not ANY old gift, but a gift that would be especially suited to you . . . something you'd really like to have. We may not actually sit down and make such a list any more but we probably have one or two in our heads.

It is unfortunate that Thanksgiving now comes smack dab in the middle of the Christmas season. Oh, it wasn't always this way but each year the decorations go up early.

Today I want to do something a little different. I want to quickly and simply give you a list of some of the things we can and should be grateful for. My process has been simple, I went through the Bible with the help of the computer and looked at every verse that used the word: thank, thankful, thanksgiving, or gratitude. I wanted to see what the inspired writers thanked God for.

First, WE THANK GOD FOR HIS CHARACTER
-- for His Goodness and Love--

(2 Chronicles 7:3) When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."

Admittedly, it would be easier to respond to God's greatness if we saw fire coming down and the glory of the Lord . . .but, we can still be grateful for His goodness and love. We thank God for His consistency. We never have to wonder about His motives. God always does what is good and loving . . . even if we don't understand it at the time. There is no one who is more constant in love than our Father in Heaven.

Next, we should thank God for his Faithfulness.

(Psalm 100:5) For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

God is never fickle. We can take Him at His Word and what he promises, He will do. Isn't it great to know that our God is not changing like the wind? On occasion we sing about this faithfulness,

Great is Thy Faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee:
Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not;
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

It's a crude analogy but hopefully one you will understand. One of the best things about dogs is their faithfulness. They watch for you out the window when you are gone. They draw close regardless of your mood. And even when you don't feel like playing, they are ready to come back instantaneously if you call. They sense when you are down and seem to share in the joyful times. Now that is just the faithfulness of a dog. God's faithfulness is perfect and complete.

Then there is God's Power and Strength

(Psalm 21:13) Be exalted, O LORD, in your strength; we will sing and praise your might.

Our God is the one who made the world by speaking a Word. He parted the sea, made it possible for women past child-bearing years to have children. He made the sun stand still for a day, made a wall fall down at the sound of a trumpet. He fed a multitude with five loaves and two fish. As God said to Abraham, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" It's a rhetorical question. The answer is no.

Our God is strong enough to protect us from any enemy. Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John "no one can take us from him" Romans 8 says, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Time does not permit us to mention God's other character traits: His Holiness, His Sovereignty, His righteousness, His Knowledge, His ever-presence, His Justice, His mercy and much more. A detailed study of God's attributes would be a good study at any time, and a great study at Thanksgiving.

WE SHOULD ALSO THANK GOD FOR HIS
ACTIVITY

(Psalm 19:1) "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

Don't you love standing outside on a dark night to look up at the myriad of stars. It is astounding to me that God created the beauty that I see all around me. I think about God's creative genius when I see a man with a woman. I can sit at the mall and just watch people. They are all so different, so unique and God made them all. Take a look at a brilliant sunset and realize how great God is. When you see it, give thanks.

God also provides. (Psalm 107:8,9) Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

Every breath we take is by His design and direction. He makes the sun shine, He gives us wisdom when we are confused, and strength when we are weak. Just look around and you will see all kinds of things God has provided. Many of the petitions of thanks Jesus gave were for food received. Let me ask you: have you planned to give thanks to God before you start eating on Thanksgiving Day? Do you do it every day? It is only polite when someone gives us something, that we say Thank You.

God answers Prayer

(Psalm 118:21) I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.

Look back at your life and think of the times you uttered a cry for help. Remember how He helped you. Remember the pleas for guidance and the direction that was given. Remember the times when a quiet time of prayer led to God's sweeping peace. Remember the times you thought God had deserted you because He didn't give you what you asked for . . .and in time you saw the wisdom of His choice. One more reason to give thanks.

We also thank God for His Word

(Psalm 56:10,11) In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise-- in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

God has seen fit to reveal Himself through the Word of God. What a rich blessing we have in His Word. It is there we see God's heart, God's plan, and God's will for us. The Word of God always speaks a timely word. Give thanks for the times

when God's Word became clear in your mind. Give thanks that we still have the freedom to read our Bible.

FINALLY, WE THANK GOD FOR HIS GRACE

1 Cor. 15:57-But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Cor. 9:15 -Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

When we make our lists of blessings we can come up with many things, experiences, and people we are grateful for. But certainly the greatest blessing to give thanks for this Thanksgiving Day is the gift of His grace.

We were lost, dead, unable to respond. God has reached out to us. He has "chosen us before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in his sight" (Eph. 1:4). We deserved hell and He offered Heaven; we deserved to be sent to debtors prison, He canceled our debt of sin; We deserved to be shunned and isolated. He embraced us. He sent the Savior to die for our sin. Surely this is the greatest blessing we could have ever received. We need to remember where we were before we met Christ and then remember that we are now children of the Almighty. A high privilege, a great blessing.

I encourage you to do four things this Thanksgiving.

1. Find a quiet place to make a Thanksgiving List.
2. Be determined to look beyond the blessings we think of easily . . .the material things. Look Heavenward.
3. Make it a point to express your thanks to those people who are special to you -- people who are your partners in the gospel, those who serve faithfully, often in the shadows.
4. Write a letter to someone who made a difference in your life: a teacher, a friend, a spiritual influence. Be specific in your Thanksgiving. It will mean the world to them.

It is true that every day should be Thanksgiving Day. It is also true that we often forget to be grateful. So, while we are thinking about gratitude, let us express it from our hearts.

I heard a recent segment of public radio, in which a reporter interviewed two inmates at San Quentin. Each expressed remarkable gratitude, for

many of the things that are a part of our thanksgiving prayers and hymns. But as they finished I could not help but think that they had create a wonderful letter, which remained unsent, unmailed. They put gratitude in words, but they were mostly unheard.

Today, we give thanks and express our gratitude. Thank God you know whom to thank. He hears your thanks and gratitude. He is the generous and gracious God who deserves to hear it, and loves it coming from your lips.

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