

THANKSGIVING DAY 2007

I have several dictionaries in my library. One of them I purchased when I was in Seminary back in the 1940's. Another I purchased just a few years ago. I often notice that over the years the definition of a word will undergo certain changes. Recently I looked up the word "thanksgiving" in both of these dictionaries. In the old one, these were the definitions:

"Act of rendering thanks, esp. to God.

"A prayer expressing gratitude.

"A public acknowledgment or celebration of divine goodness and mercies."

Thanksgiving Day was defined as "a day (usually the last Thursday of November) set apart each year for thanksgiving and praise to God."

The definition in my newer dictionary is much shorter, but it carries the same emphasis: "A national holiday set apart for giving thanks to God, celebrated in the United States on the fourth Thursday of November and in Canada on the second Monday of October."

So, by definition, Thanksgiving Day is a day in which we turn to God in song and word to thank Him for the blessings of the past year. And we all should know that when our forefathers spoke of God, they may not all have had the right ideas about God, *but we know that they were thinking about the God of the Bible, Who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

And I hope that none of you are deceived into thinking that Allah is the same God as the God of the Bible, but that the Muslims just call Him by a different name. Nothing could be farther from the truth. All false gods are non-existent gods with the exception of the Devil who presently is "the god of this age," but who doomed to hell which was especially prepared for him and the angels who revolted against the living God. Jeremiah was one of the many prophets of Scripture who have given us the truth. We read in Jeremiah 10:10,

But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting king: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation.

And we don't gather together in a meeting like this just to say we are thankful and have a good feeling in our hearts without directing our thanksgiving to anyone. We have been giving thanks to God -- to the one, true God, to the triune God -- the Father, His Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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Our well-known doxology says,

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

It is wonderful to have a national day of thanksgiving to God for His goodness to us, and for the many blessing He is constantly bestowing upon us. But every day should be a thanksgiving day to God for those of us who know Jesus Christ as our Savior. The Scriptures exhort us to give thanks to Him always for everything. That is Ephesians 5:20. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 teaches us that we have an obligation to thanks to God for our salvation.. Colossians 1:12 says essentially the same thing. When we think of the many things that we need to be thankful for – spiritual blessings, physical blessings, material blessings – we have to confess what the Psalmist said in Psalm 40:5,

5 Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

But the Psalmist tells us that it is good for us to give thanks to the Lord:

1 It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High:

2 To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night (Psa. 92:1-2).

Even thanking the Lord helps us if we are having trouble with sins of any kind:

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks (Ephesians 5:3-4).

But have we ever stopped to think that, if we are failing to thank God, we are sinning. When was it that the sin of unthankfulness got started in the earth? It started in the Garden of Eden when the first sins were committed by our first parents.

When the Apostle Paul wrote the greatest treatise that has ever been written on the doctrine of salvation, he began by proving beyond any doubt that man is a sinner, and therefore, in need of a Savior. He spoke in chapter 1 of Romans that God has put in every human heart the conscious-

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ness, the realization that there is a God. He stated it this way, and then spoke of the consequences:

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things (Rom. 1:20-23).

I want you to notice those words in verse 21, “neither were thankful.” They did not give thanks to God as their Creator. They did not give thanks to God that He had placed that knowledge in their hearts.

In studying this passage again I turned to Bishop Moule’s commentary on Romans. He had a lot of very valuable truth that he had written, but I want to give you one statement in particular. Here it is:

There is a dark sequence, in the logic of facts, between unworthy thoughts of God and the development of the basest forms of human wrong” (p. 48).

What did Bishop Moule mean? He meant was that the rejection of the knowledge of God, which is the rejection of God Himself, God gives men over to the vilest, the basest of human sins. Man was not thankful for the knowledge of God. He rejected God, and from that day to this, when men are rejecting God, rejecting His Word, rejecting anything that has to do with His Son, our list of sins is growing longer and grosser as we continue to reap that harvest of the charge that was made from the Garden of Eden on, “neither were thankful.”

Now let me span all of time in Scripture to the last days. If you are among those who believe that the world is going to get better and better, let me tell you on the authority of Scripture, that you are dead wrong. Paul, in writing to Timothy in his last epistle to be included in Scripture (which means that he was writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit), had this to say about times in the last days. I won’t read the whole passage, just the first two verses of 2 Timothy 3:

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy (2

Tim. 3:1-2).

Paul called the last days “perilous.” The Greek word is *χαλεποί*. It means *weak, difficult, and dangerous*. The only other time that this word is used in the NT is in Matthew 8:28 where it is translated “fierce.”

28 And when He [the Lord] was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes [or *Gadarenes*], there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

What does “fierce” mean? It means terrorized, unrestrained cruelty, overpowering anger. And still men will be denying that there is a God, and even if they believe in a God, they will be denying Him the right to have anything to do with them.

Concl: We can see from all of this that we have every reason to be thankful, thankful that He has put in our hearts the knowledge that He exists, and that we need to be submissive to Him. In the light of what God is as revealed in the Word, and in Christ, we see what vile sinners we are and that we are in desperate need of a Savior, that the only Savior is the Lord Jesus Christ Who died for our sins and was raised again because He had accomplished all that was necessary for our justification.

Let me send you away with two verses from Paul’s letter to the Colossian church after which Dr. Lockwood will lead us in a hymn, and then lead us in a closing prayer. Here are the verses:

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.