

Philippians 4 – Prayer and Thanksgiving

11/22/17

By the time most of you receive this NEWSLETTER, Thanksgiving Day will have already passed. Hopefully, most of you were in attendance on the night before Thanksgiving when we gathered at the Columbus Avenue church building for a time of praise to our Father. Our purpose during this time of the year is to emphasize the importance of giving thanks to God for all He has done for us. Obviously, this is the feeling we should have all year long.

We have been studying Paul's letter to the Philippians in our Sunday morning auditorium class. My sermons for the past month and a half have had passages from Philippians as their inspiration. In addition, the last several NEWSLETTER articles have been from Philippians as well. Today's passage could not have been more appropriate for this Thanksgiving season. This is what Paul tells his readers in **Philippians 4:6-7**:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Prayer is an important part of our relationship with our God. We need to be in communication with Him the study of His Word and through our prayers to Him. Our prayers to Him need to have three important elements, all given in the passage above. We are to praise Him for the God that He is and ask Him for the help that only He can provide. Other scriptures tell us the importance of asking in faith, knowing if we have asked anything according to His will, He will hear us and answer us. But, there is one element in our prayers to God that is also demanded of us. That element is thankfulness.

It is much the same as a father giving good gifts to his children. That child is not to accept his father's gifts as if they are owed to him. If they were owed, they would not be gifts. The child should accept the gifts with thankfulness. We, as God's children, are no different. We are to be thankful for what God has given and will give us. We deserve nothing. He gives us precious gifts. And for them, we should approach Him with thanksgiving, not as an afterthought, but as our first thought.

Paul, in his prayers, always gave thanks for the people to whom he is writing. **(1 Corinthians 1:4, Ephesians 1:16, Philippians 1:3, Colossians 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:2, 2 Thessalonians 1:3, 2 Timothy 1:3, Philemon 1:4)** He also tells his readers (and that includes us) that our prayers should be filled with thanksgiving for the gifts of grace and the privilege of partaking in the Lord's Supper. **(1 Corinthians 1:4, 10:16, 2 Corinthians 4:15)** We are to thank God in our prayers for the opportunity to help others with our giving. **(2 Corinthians 9:11)** Every time we open our mouths, thanksgiving should come out. **(Ephesians 5:4)** Paul tells Timothy (and I'm glad he did!) that God created food to be consumed with Thanksgiving. **(1 Timothy 4:4)**

James tells us in **James 1:17-18** that ***“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like***

shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.”

Our salvation is God’s gift to us, along with all of the spiritual gifts that involves. We do not deserve it, we are not worthy of it, it is not owed to us. Yet, we have it. And for that, I am thankful every day, not just the third Thursday in November.

--- Johnny Stephens