

The Power of Thankfulness Series

Part 1: The Sacrifice of Thanks

"Make thankfulness your sacrifice to God, and keep the vows you made to the Most High." Psalm 50:23

We often tell the story of how God gave the Ultimate Sacrifice for mankind, giving His only Son as the sacrificial lamb for our sins. If you think about it, this means so much since God is all powerful and could've chosen so many other ways to save us from the wages of sin. He chose to give a sacrifice instead of choosing a way that cost Him nothing. That's how much He loves us. That is the type of God we serve – a good, good Father.

A Good God

"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! His faithful love endures forever." Psalm 107:1

What comes to mind when you hear 'God is good'?

The word *good* is used for a broad range of positive aspects. Here are a few of its various meanings:

- Having the qualities required for a particular role.
- Possessing or displaying moral virtue.
- Giving pleasure; enjoyable or satisfying.

God embodies the qualities of any and every capacity in which we could ever need Him – as our Father, our friend, our guide, our role model, our help and many other roles. He is more than capable to be all that we need and more. His very being is virtuous and honorable. We may not understand or even like the things that the Sovereign God allows and does not allow; but His decisions are always led with the best intention for our lives. Moreover, He is a God that wants to please us, that is enjoyable to be around and that has set many things in place to satisfy us. Everything about God is good. And for the next few weeks, we will look at why and how we should be thankful to God and learn how to harness the power of having a thankful heart.

A Sacrifice That Pays Off

Our nation talks about thankfulness a lot during the month of November. Since the theme is in the air, I believe it is a good time to think about all that God has done for us and all that is on the way! Our memory verse talks of thankfulness as a sacrifice and it is. It takes more than we think to give God the thanks He is actually due. It takes a lot to thank God when you may not be in the happiest of places, may not have all you desire, or may have endured pains and losses that still sting at the thought.

"But giving thanks is a sacrifice that truly honors me. If you keep to my path, I will reveal to you the salvation of God." Psalm 50:23 NLT

I'm sure we have done many things to try to honor God. Perhaps putting down our plate, or trying to pray everyday or working hard to avoid sin. But the verse above says that the sacrifice of thanks is one that ***truly honors Him***. So I want to challenge each person today. Here is the challenge (and yes, it is a tough one): let your daily prayers to God for the month of November be full of thanks...

and ONLY thanks. Some may not consider this hard to do. But it can be difficult when there are things you want to petition God for, answers you need from Him, and problems that need to be resolved in your favor. What sense does it make to only thank God instead of telling Him what you really need or want?

"Enter His courts with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is Good..." Psalm 100:4-5a

Think of this example: when I left home for college, one of the things I missed most was my mother's cooking. I'm not a picky eater but I cringed at the thought of food served in a cafeteria in a kitchen I couldn't see or processed canned and boxed foods prepared in a factory in God knows where. So when I would go home and my mom cooked, I would be so appreciative. I would give her hugs and kisses and would repeatedly tell her thanks and shower her with praises of how good her food was. I would pack up bags and bowls of her meals to bring back with me and let her know how much I appreciated it and how much it would help me get thru the next few days and (if I planned it right) even weeks. Now at this time, of all my siblings, only my younger brother was still living at home along with my father. During one home visit, upon seeing the feast my mom was preparing for me, my brother commented "Man, the only time she cooks like this is when you come home." In response, my mom said "Because she appreciates it".

See, when someone knows how much you appreciate all you do for them, it not only makes it easier for them to do, but they truly *want* to do it for you and do it in abundance! Have you ever felt the warmth of sincere appreciation after doing an arduous task? All of sudden, the thing that was so taxing and draining to do now somehow feels worth it because of something as simple as thanks. So imagine what the God who holds the worlds in His hands can and will do for you if you sacrifice your complaints, desires and pain for a few weeks to instead give Him praise and thanks for the many things He has done for you and for those you know. How will He respond when a problem hits you on Monday and you respond with a prayer of thanks for working it out in advance?

It is time to put our memories into gear and remember those times we seem to have forgotten over the years. Times where He saved you, where you did not get the punishment you should have, when He healed you, or changed the bad report, when He blessed you when you did not deserve it, when He spared you just because, when He gave you peace and understanding, when He strengthened you during the hardest of times, when He wouldn't let you give up, when He pulled you through, when He answered your prayer, when He gave you wisdom, paid that bill, opened that door or shut that trap... and oh, so much more! It will change you, your perception of Him and His response to your needs.

Reflection Questions

1. How often do you thank God?
2. Is it easy or difficult for you to give God thanks? Why?
3. Why do you think thanks is considered a sacrifice?
4. How do you think the "thankfulness challenge" will change your relationship with God?