



The Transforming
Power
of
Thanksgiving

Dr Cecil Stewart OBE

The Transforming Power of Thanksgiving

'Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing'. **Psalm 107 v 21-22.**

Thanksgiving is a life-giving power. Thankful people have discovered how to **walk by faith** and not by feelings. There is certainty and not confusion. Certainty comes through knowing the Lord, His word and His will.

If we are silent and under our circumstances, then we are no different from the world who don't know the Lord. **Psalm 37 v 4** says 'Delight thyself also in the Lord: and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart'.

Thanksgiving is a choice that we can make and it adds value to ourselves and to those we are associated with on a daily basis.



Many people fall into the trap of being negative and complaining, not realising that this actually puts them at a **disadvantage** and destroys their creativity. It takes their attention from the good things that God has planned unto the negative things that the enemy has planned.

***When we are sad and silent
we are more open to wrong
thinking and negativity.***

My father did not know the Lord as a younger man and when we were growing up I remember him being very negative about the farm, crops, cattle and even the family.

He was **blessed** with an amazing wife, 7 boys and 2 girls. He had so much he could have been thankful for, but he said often 'it would take 10 more people like me to do all the complaining that needs to be done'.

This is such a sad statement. It was something the enemy influenced him to do, which took life from him and made him sad and ineffective. Thank the Lord he bowed his knee in **repentance** later in life.

When we are thankful, we are creative and we can accomplish great things for the kingdom of God.

Thanksgiving is a declaration of faith, it means that even in the midst of hard times when things are not going well, we are declaring that Jesus is still Lord even in the worst of times.

Habakkuk 3 v 17-19 gives a picture of a very negative situation. The fruit tree is not blossoming, the crops are not growing and the cattle are not doing well. It is an overview of a recession and a very negative time, but the right **attitude** is shown here 'Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation'.

Here is the key - no matter how bleak things may look and how many bad things may have happened, we can turn it around if we will lift our voices and **be thankful for what God has done** and for the blessings that still remain.



Put Your Thoughts Through Security

Thanksgiving draws people to us and they are made aware of the **grace of God** when they see us being thankful even when things are not going very well.

Negative thoughts can be so discouraging if we express them. Speaking these thoughts gives them power, but when we refuse to speak those thoughts they have **no power** and they must leave.

There is of course a place for sharing our challenges with others so they can pray and help.

I love the example that someone used about checking in at the airport. If there is anything suspicious in our baggage we are immediately searched and any dangerous items are removed.

We need to also put our thoughts through security. Don't let thoughts of fear, unbelief, worry and negative attitudes towards others through. We need to arrest them right away and **remove them** from our baggage.



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We need to look for ways of **adding value** to people every day, even those who have hurt us and those who may look at us in a negative way.

The greatest thing we can do for our own health and the health of others is to have an attitude of **gratitude** and to do all we can to encourage others.

Jesus taught this very clearly in **Matthew 5 v 11** when He said 'Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake'.

He said 'rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven', see Matthew 5 v 11-12.

It's a wonderful thing to realise that we as God's people have divine ability to be totally different, to be **transformed** and to live a transforming life that affects others.



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We should not take negative thoughts anymore than we would take poison.

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In **Matthew 6 v 8-25** Jesus is speaking about our thoughts. He said 'therefore take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink'.

In other words, He is saying we shouldn't give in to worrying about the lack of finance or **concerns about our future**.

Don't focus on the worst that could happen, we should be focusing on the best that could happen and thanking God that **He is the source of every good** and every perfect gift.

We should not take negative thoughts anymore than we would take poison. We need to train our minds to **refuse trouble makers** and don't let them into our hearts.

That is why Jesus said in **John 14 v 27** 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid'.

That means we have a choice!



1. Lack of vision regarding who God is and what He has done

When we consider who God is:

He is a God of love beyond our comprehension.
He is our Heavenly Father and loves us more than we could even realise.

He is almighty.

He is for us.

He is a good God.

He gave Jesus His only son to die in our place, to shed His blood to cleanse us from all guilt and sin and give us assurance of eternal life.

That is enough to make us thankful all the days of our lives.

2. People are not thankful because they don't realise who they are and what their purpose is

Those who have received Jesus as their Saviour and Lord have been made heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, see **Romans 8 v 17**.

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We have been brought into the family of God and have a **purpose and a destiny** that is so exciting and we should be enthusiastic about the fact that we are ambassadors, see **2 Corinthians 5 v 20**.

This means we represent the kingdom of heaven and we have been given the **ministry of reconciliation**.

Instead of allowing misunderstandings to grow, envy and jealousy to develop, we can pray, **believe** and act in such a way that reconciliation can happen where there has been offence, division or where there is a lack of communication between family.

All of this needs to be demolished according to **2 Corinthians 10 v 5** 'Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ'.

Satan loves nothing better than to see families separated, divided and suspicious of one another and speaking evil of each other.

That is the work of the devil, but "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" **2 Corinthians 5 v 18**



James 1 v 16-17 reminds us that 'every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father above'.

Those who are deceived into doing things like being unfaithful to their husband or wife or acting in a way that gives the lusts of the flesh pre-eminence, they are hurting themselves and others and this can go on for generations if they allow it.

But, the **good news** is they can use their authority to put a stop to it through forgiveness, love and faith.

There is nothing good outside the **will of God**, so when we engage in things outside His will we are actually opening the door to satan who seeks to destroy us, see **Ephesians 4 v 27**.

Psalm 100 exhorts us to make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

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There are many people making complaining noises in traffic, on their way to work, complaining about their employer, about the government, about the politicians and that is a very unhealthy habit to develop.

We are exhorted to make a joyful noise and speak well of each other! Each and every one of us have faults but we need to focus in on the good things and remember that 'while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us', **Romans 5 v 8**.

Psalm 95 v 1-11 encourages us to come and sing before the Lord, to be people who express thanksgiving.

Remember we can be thankful without giving thanks, but it is when we give thanks that our faith is released and good things happen.

It's like giving a present. You can intend to give it, but unless you actually **give it**, the person will never benefit.



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There is so much that can be said about this subject but it needs to be meditated upon, considered and made a way of life, not just one day a week when we go to church, but we must **develop a lifestyle** of giving thanks.

David said in **Psalms 26 v 7** 'That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works'.

The Apostle Paul said in **Philippians 4 v 8** to think on things of good report that are of virtue, and that are going to bring praise and strength.

We have a choice of what enters **our minds** and how we go forward in life. Unfortunately most of the world do not know or exercise this wonderful privilege of the transforming power of thanksgiving.

When we are thankful and **grateful to God**, it gives us a heart that is sensitive to the Holy Spirit and deals with a hard heart.

When we are always complaining and feel we have been badly done by.



We can develop a hard heart against people and against life, and that is not good for either our health or our relationship with God or anyone else

Sadness and selfishness opens the door to the enemy to rob us of faith, peace and good relationships, but thanksgiving opens the door to the Lord and the blessings that flow from Him.

1. Why should we be thankful?

We should be thankful to God daily for the gift of life. **Life is a gift** and we only have a short time on this earth, so we should be grateful for every moment in every hour of every day, and express gratitude and thanksgiving to God for it.

We should give thanks for eternal life. If we have been **forgiven**, we should be the most thankful people on the planet.

God forgives us as soon as we repent and we should give thanks for this continually.



We are born again, **redeemed** and the blood of Jesus has cleansed us.

We should be thankful for forgiveness, for redemption, for the Cross, for the word of God which is a lamp unto our feet, for the Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth, and shows us things to come, for faith.

Hebrews 12 v 2 says He is the **author and finisher of our faith**, for hope, thankful that we have a purpose and a destiny, for family and a good future, for the privilege of reaching those that are lost and showing them how they can come into a relationship with their Creator.

Psalms 118 v 15-16 shows the atmosphere in God's house, it says 'The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly'.

This is what we should be experiencing when we come together to worship, as well as in our daily lives, a voice of **thanksgiving and rejoicing**, not a voice of murmuring, complaining and negativity.



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We should be thankful for the love, mercy and the longsuffering of God toward us when we were yet sinners, for the **gift of righteousness** is not earned through our own good works, as it tells us clearly in **Ephesians 2 v 8**.

It is by grace through faith we are saved, not by works. We should thank God that He is just and upright, and He has imparted to us His divine nature.

I believe that in heaven the greatest theme will be the theme of redemption, how that we who were lost and heading for hell, were redeemed by the **blood of Jesus** and brought out of the kingdom of darkness, and restored back to the Father.

The worship and praise in heaven will be '**worthy is the Lamb who has redeemed us**', Redemption is bigger than any of us have yet grasped.

We should be thankful because the word of God shows us the benefits and the **blessings** of being thankful.



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Psalms 100 v 4 says 'enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise'. We can see in **2 Timothy 3 v 1-5** how one of the marks of the last days will be that people are unthankful and unholy.

In **Romans 1 v 21** it shows how those people who were deceived and turned aside to living a life of deception and darkness were unthankful.

People can become deceived and influenced by the enemy when they do not walk in an attitude of gratitude.

Deuteronomy 28 v 27 shows how they were cursed because they did not serve the Lord with thankfulness for the abundance of all things.

We can be thankful to the Lord that He has given us a pure motive and a heart to serve Him.

That He has given us a kingdom vision that enables us to be bigger people and a blessing to those of all cultures and schools of thought, to love them no matter how much they may differ from us.



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Redeemed people should be thankful for all that He has done for them and then a fruitful life will follow.

Jeremiah 30 v 19-22 needs to be studied. It talks about the fact that through us thanksgiving brings multiplication and we shall not remain small.

In other words, as we are thankful and **grateful**, increase happens. Our families are affected, the community is greatly helped through thankful people, and we are investing in the lives of others, as we show them how to live a life of thankfulness and to become an example. See **1 Timothy 1 v 12-16**.

Paul spoke of his gratefulness and thankfulness for the mercy that God showed to him when he didn't deserve it, and how he was a pattern for those who would believe. **Thanksgiving brings growth and increase.**

1 Thessalonians 5 v 18 says 'In everything give thanks', We need to be ready to forgive on a daily basis and not harbour grudges, offence or talk about the wrongs that others have done to us.



By the grace of God we can forgive them and get on with our lives. See **Matthew 18 v 15-17 and 23-35**.

We can deal with our hurts, divisions and offence which come to everyone by giving them over to the Lord, and making sure we have a good relationship with the Father and especially our own families.

2. How can we stay thankful?

Focus our minds on the Giver of every blessing and benefit.

Continue daily to lift up our minds and hearts to give glory, honour, praise and thanksgiving to the One who has given the gift of life and redeemed us from the hand of the enemy.

Remember how much we have been blessed, that helps us to remain thankful and fill our mouths with His word everyday.

In **Psalms 103** David said 'bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me, bless His Holy name'.



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David reminds us of the **blessings** that God has given, He forgives all our iniquities and much more, heals all our diseases, redeems our lives from destruction.

We need to focus on these things, just like when we are about to take a photograph, we focus on the object we want to capture.

If we want a long term picture of life in health and good things, then we must focus on the word of God and live it out so others will be impacted.

Philippians 2 v 5 reminds us to let the mind of Christ be in us. We can actually allow the mind of Christ to operate in our lives.

Isaiah 26 v 3 promises He will keep those in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him. We need to decide in advance where our thoughts will be for this will affect our mouths.

According to **Romans 12 v 2** when we keep our minds renewed we will then be reminded of the will of God and our mouths will speak life.



See **Proverbs 13 v 3** 'He that keeps his mouth keeps his life'. **1 Peter 3 v 10** 'For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile'.

What comes out of our mouths can be life-giving or it can bring death. The scriptures say that life and death is in the power of the tongue, see **Proverbs 18 v 21**.

“ *Isaiah 26 v 3 promises He will keep those in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him.* ”

2 Timothy 1 v 7 shows that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love and of power and a sound mind.

But if we want to live this kind of life we have to be intentional, we have to do it on purpose and not be passive or casual about it.

We must make it a top priority and let nothing hinder us from developing this lifestyle, which is really a life of faith.

3. Results of thanksgiving

When we are thankful to the Lord and led by the Holy Spirit then we find that the right relationships are developed and we make divine connections, our eyes are open to the good things God is bringing to us daily.

Romans 8 v 28 says that 'all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose'.

Even the things that look bad, like offence, criticism from others against us or unfair treatment that has been given to us, if we continue to walk in faith, keep forgiving and reach out to be a blessing then it will turn around to be for good.

Proverbs 3 v 5-6 reminds us “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.”

When we walk in faith and get on with our lives, and don't turn aside or be distracted by the enemy or by what people say, then we will continue to remain strong and we will maintain an **attitude of gratitude**.

Isaiah 45 v 2 shows how He will go before us to make the crooked places straight and the rough places smooth.

Peace and purpose will follow as we are thankful and as we honour the Lord and do that which is right in His sight.

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keep forgiving and reach out to be a blessing then it will turn around to be for good.

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We will experience increased guidance and light for **Psalms 119 v 105** says “Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.”

Hebrews 11 v 5 reveals how Enoch walked with God and before God took him he had a testimony that pleased Him.

When we walk in faith and thanksgiving we are pleasing God, we become givers and not just takers.

We look for ways we can bless people every day, We use our faith for good things to happen in our families, our finances, our relationships.

Proverbs 17 v 22 says ‘a merry heart does good like a medicine’.

Finally **2 Chronicles 20 v 22** shows when they began to sing and to praise, God sent an ambush against the enemy.



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They were facing the biggest battle they had ever faced. One that was impossible to win in their own strength, but when they heard from God and began to thank Him, to praise Him and to obey Him, the enemy was overcome, and they saw God do it without losing one single person.

May we develop a lifestyle of thanksgiving and if we do so, we will be investing in our future and the future of others.

We will not be wasting time complaining, we will be strong, healthy and victorious. Even in the bad times we will see good results.



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