*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 4 - 9

*Gratitude*

**Monday, November 4 Philippians 1:3-11**

*“I thank my God every time I remember you”*

 Paul begins his prayer of thanksgiving with the comment that he prays for the Philippians “with joy.” His primary intention is to affirm his affection for the Philippians, but his greeting also announces a theme that runs throughout the letter: the believer should be joyful. For Paul, joy is not the result of finding himself in comfortable circumstances but of seeing the gospel make progress though his circumstances and through the circumstances of the Philippians, whatever they might be. The two reasons he gives for his joyful thanks show this clearly.

 Paul’s first reason is that the Philippians have entered into “partnership” with him in the work of the gospel from the time that he first preached it among them to the present. He is thankful for their practical assistance of his efforts to proclaim the gospel, and for the consistency of their support. Paul’s second reason for joyful thankfulness to God is his confidence that God will complete the good work he has begun in the Philippians. This work is the spiritual growth of the believers who are becoming more like Christ.

*Thank you, Lord, for faithful companions in my life of faith. Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 5 Ephesians 5:15-20**

*“Always give thanks”*

 Christianity is a religion of the Holy Spirit. All we are and have is a result of his work. The Spirit is not an optional add-on, or a privilege of the super-religious. Rather, he is both the source and the proof of our salvation. To be in Christ and to be in the Spirit are virtually the same. To ask us to be filled with the Spirit is to ask us to focus our attention on Christ and his presence in us, to open ourselves to the continual transforming work of the Spirit so that the presence of Christ empowers and shapes our lives.

 Paul points out two results of the Spirit’s work in the life of a Christian: singing and thanksgiving. Singing expresses the inner joy living according to the Spirit of Christ brings, and the giving of thanks recognizes that we are not independent creatures but people who owe allegiance to God and have been blessed by him. To do so “in the name of Christ” affirms that everything we have from God has come to us through Jesus Christ. Thankful lives are lives that fully respond to God’s grace.

*Thank you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for every blessing in my life. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 6 Luke 17:11-19**

*“He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him”*

 The reaction of the nine in not returning and thanking Jesus is an illustration of how often we take God’s gracious actions for granted. To avoid making the same mistake as the nine, we need to make it our practice to thank God for his grace virtually every time we pray. We do this not merely as a religious habit but as a way of concretely expressing from the heart gratitude for the many gifts that come from him. When the blessings of life are seen as a result of God’s grace, it makes us into gentler, more grateful people. Such an attitude prevents us from assessing life in terms of what we think we deserve.

 In coming back to thank Jesus, the one showed how he had personally accepted the blessing Jesus had given him. In return, Jesus gifted him even more – the declaration that faith had made him well, a wellness that went beyond his physical healing to the healing of his soul. Our most fundamental reason for being grateful to God is that he has saved us through his Son, Jesus Christ, something we could never have done for ourselves.

*Every day I thank you, Father, for your salvation. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 4 - 9

*Gratitude*

**Thursday, November 7 Colossians 1:3-8**

*“We give thanks to God for you”*

 Paul celebrates who the Colossian Christians are becoming in Christ, and at the heart of his celebration is gratitude. In the ordinary structure of a Greek letter it was customary to express a few words of thanksgiving for the welfare of the recipients. Paul does more: he expresses heartfelt thanks focused on what he knows is going on among the people he is addressing. Here is a description of who we are as Christians – at least, who we should be.

 First, Paul gives thanks for their faith in Christ Jesus. He celebrates that they have opened their hearts to the grace of God which is offered them in his Son. Second, Paul is thankful for the Colossians because he has heard of their love for all the saints. The many practical and often sacrificial ways they cared for others were a clear sign to Paul that they were following the teachings of Christ. Third, Paul celebrates the hope they hold on to, a hope that knows their ultimate destiny is with God in heaven. Because they know where they are going, they are able to live for Christ in the present.

*Thank you, Father, for the faith, hope and love that are ours in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

**Friday, November 8 1 Thessalonians 5:14-22**

*“In everything give thanks”*

 “Rejoice always – pray without ceasing – in everything give thanks.” The third command grows out of the first two. Similarly, joy and unceasing prayer are only possible when one is practicing an attitude of gratitude. These Pauline commands are deeply rooted in his understanding about God. Because he was convinced that in any and all circumstances God was at work on behalf of his people (see Romans 8:28), he could therefore urge the Thessalonians to give thanks in all circumstances.

 This is so even if the circumstances involves the death of a believer because, even though death is an awful reality, it is not the last word or act (see Romans 8:31-39). The last word or act belongs to God, and it is resurrection and life. Thus for Paul, joy, prayer and thanksgiving are all ways of worshipping or praising God for who he is and how he is always watching out for us. To rejoice, to pray with confidence, and to give thanks is to see the hand of God in whatever is happening and to remain certain of God’s salvation.

*Cultivate in me, Lord, an attitude of gratitude as I remember all you do for me. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 9 Psalm 100:1-5**

*“Enter his gates with thanksgiving”*

 The lesson of “The Old Hundredth” is simple yet deeply profound: God rules the world, and consequently we belong to God. This message lies not only at the heart of the book of Psalms but also at the heart of Jesus’ preaching and of the whole of Scripture. In a quite different context, the apostle Paul taught essentially the same lesson as the Psalm: “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body (2 Corinthians 6:19-20).

 We are not our own! This is a difficult lesson to hear and to get across in a culture that encourages us to be self-made men and women. Most of us seem to believe the popular saying, “It’s my life to live.” The Bible insists, however, that our lives are not simply our own to do with as we please. Genuine life is found in submission to God. In biblical terms, to live is to be grateful to God, and to be grateful to God is to live.

*Loving and faithful Father, I am thankful that I belong to you. Amen.*