

Week 2 – Thanking

WEEK 2 – DAY 1 – THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING THANKS

Phil 4:6 In nothing be anxious but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

Col. 4:2 Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving.

We all can understand what it means to pray and to give thanks. When we pray, we are shining within, but if we also give thanks, we will become enlivened within. Prayer may be likened to connecting the wires, and thanksgiving, to shining the light. Sometimes our “wires” have been connected, yet it seems that we do not sense any reaction. The light does not shine if there is only prayer but no thanksgiving. Therefore, if we want to have a life that is always shining without flickering, we need to pray unceasingly and give thanks in everything. According to our experience, if we pray and also give thanks, even if before we were not abiding in the Lord, we will spontaneously enter into the Lord and abide in Him. If we want to get in and not come out but remain inside all the time, we need to pray unceasingly and give thanks in everything. (Lee, *Abiding in the Lord to Enjoy His Life*, Chapter 3, Section 1)

Those who know how to pray always give a considerable amount of thanks in their prayer. It is unreasonable to ask without thanking. We always thank someone who agrees to do something for us. We not only thank him when he has accomplished the task, but we even thank him when he merely agrees to do the task. Consequently, there should be thanksgiving in every prayer. Once we have peace within and the burden has been lifted, we should give thanks. We should say, “Thank You, Lord, that I can tell You what concerns me. I have peace within. I believe You have heard my prayer and answered my petition. I thank You.” We should not wait until our prayer is fulfilled to give thanks; we should begin giving thanks even before it is fulfilled. Each time we sense peace within as we pray, we should give thanks. (Lee, *Lessons for New Believers*, Chapter 7, Section 3)

It is significant that in [Philippians] 4:6 Paul does not speak of prayer, petition, *and* thanksgiving, but of prayer and petition *with* thanksgiving. Both our prayer and petition should be accompanied by thanksgiving to the Lord. Recently I once again learned the lesson of being thankful to the Lord. When I asked the Lord to restore my health, I was rebuked by Him for not thanking Him for the measure of health I still had. Whenever we are ill, we need to say, “Lord, I thank You that I am still healthy to a certain degree. Lord, I am ill, but I am not so ill that I cannot minister Christ to the saints. But, Lord, You know that I am not altogether healthy. Therefore, I ask You to improve my health and make me fully healthy again.” We all need to learn to petition the Lord in this way. (Lee, *Life-study of Philippians*, Chapter 62, Section 2)

In prayer we need to be watchful and alert, not negligent. Such watchfulness should be accompanied by thanksgiving. A lack of thanksgiving is an indication of prayerlessness. The prayer life is kept by watching with thanksgiving. (Col. 4:2, footnote 3)

In charging us to persevere in prayer, Paul tells us to watch in it with thanksgiving (4:2). This indicates that if we are not thankful to God for anything, we must be lacking in prayer. All day long we need to thank God. We need to be those who continually offer thanks to Him. If we are constantly giving thanks to the Lord, do you think it will be possible for a brother to argue with his wife? Surely not! Arguments between husband and wife are a sign of prayerlessness. They argue because they are lacking in prayer. The sign of a praying person is thankfulness. If you are one who perseveres in prayer, you will always be thankful to the Lord. This giving of thanks to Him will preserve you in your life of prayer.

In 4:2 Paul does not say to persevere in prayer and to watch. He says, “Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving.” We watch in prayer by the giving of thanks. If we continually offer thanks to the Lord, the adversary will not be able to carry us off from our prayer life. Prayer is maintained by watching in it with thanksgiving. (Lee, *Life-study of Colossians*, Chapter 65, Section 3)

WEEK 2 – DAY 2 – GIVING THANKS IN EVERYTHING AND FOR ALL THINGS

Col. 3:17 And whatever you do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

1 Thes. 5:16-18a Always rejoice, Unceasingly pray, In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

In what should we give thanks? Colossians 3:17 and 1 Thessalonians 5:18 say that we should give thanks in everything. We should have a habit of giving thanks. This means that whatever may happen—great things, small things, good things, or bad things—we have to give thanks. One brother was a railway worker. Once while he was working, a train came by and through an oversight one of his legs was cut off by the train. When he woke up at the hospital, he was asked how he felt. He answered, "Thank and praise the Lord." When he was asked, "How can you thank and praise the Lord at a time like this?", he answered, "I do not consider how many legs I have lost. I consider how many legs I have left." This is the tone of victory. The tone of victory is one in which we thank and praise in the midst of trials. Our hearts should yield to the Lord. We should accept whatever He gives us joyfully, and we should rest in His will. It is not enough for us to merely endure the trials. The kind of endurance described in the Bible is not a passive endurance. Colossians 1:11 says that we are empowered unto all endurance with joy. The kind of endurance that is sustained through the gritting of teeth is of little use to anyone. An overcoming endurance is one which endures with joy, and only those who fully embrace God's will can endure and suffer with joy. We must always rejoice, unceasingly pray, give thanks in everything, and not quench the Spirit (1 Thes. 5:16-19). Paul puts these four things together. If you want to pray, you have to rejoice. If you want to pray, you have to give thanks in everything. And if you want to pray, you must not quench the Spirit. Rejoicing always, praying unceasingly, giving thanks in everything, and not quenching the Spirit go together. If you do not rejoice, you quench the Spirit. If you do not pray, you quench the Spirit. If you do not give thanks, you quench the Spirit. All the day long, you have to say, "Praise the Lord!" All the day long, you should give thanks in everything. (Nee, *Collected Works of Watchman Nee, The (Set 2) Vol. 41*, Chapter 25, Section 2)

All the New Testament believers are Josephs. You may not feel that you are a Joseph, but the Lord says that you are. As long as you are a believer, you are no longer a Reuben, but a Joseph. Because you are a Joseph, everything that happens to you is a blessing. Heaven, earth, the snow, the rain, the dew, and everything under the earth is a blessing to you. This is the reason the New Testament tells us to thank the Lord for all things (Eph. 5:20; 1 Thes. 5:18). I wonder whether the parents of naughty children ever thank the Lord for their naughty children. If you have a naughty child, you must thank the Lord, saying, "Lord, how I thank You for this naughty child. Lord, I thank You for this dissenting, rebellious child. What a blessing this child is to me!" If such a child remains a Reuben, everything will be a curse to him. But if he believes in the Lord, he will become another Joseph, and then whatever happens to him will be a blessing. If you read the New Testament carefully, you will see that the New Testament believers are the blessed people. We are those under the universal blessing. This is why we should not curse anyone (Rom. 12:14). Because everything is a blessing to us, we cannot help but bless others. Even if others do something bad to us, that bad thing is a blessing. Hence, there is no need for us to curse them; instead of cursing, we would bless them. We may say, "Thank you for hating me. God bless you. Your hatred is a blessing to me. I can bless you in any kind of situation. If you treat me well, I bless you. If you mistreat me, I still bless you." Praise the Lord that we are the blessed people!

If you see this, you will realize that you are under God's blessing. However, we often still speak in a natural way. When we gain something, we thank the Lord for His blessing. But when we lose something, usually we do not thank Him. We need to see the vision that we are Josephs, that we are the blessed people, that we are under God's blessing. Whatever happens to us, good or bad, we should say, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! This is a blessing." (Lee, *Life-Study of Genesis*, Chapter 106, Section 4)

WEEK 2 – DAY 3 –GIVING THANKS IN ALL THINGS TO LIVE THE PROPER CHRISTIAN LIFE

1 Thes. 5: 18 In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Col. 3:17b ...do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Eph. 5:20 Giving thanks at all times for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father.

Apparently, we cannot find the truth of giving thanks in everything throughout the whole Bible. Actually, the Bible, which is a book of mysteries, contains an untold measure of light beneath the surface. Among the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, only three—1 Thessalonians, Colossians, and Ephesians—mention the matter of giving thanks in everything. All three of these books were written by the apostle Paul, and their contents show a sequence that is mysterious and wonderful.

The first of these books, 1 Thessalonians, speaks of how we can be saved and how we should have a holy life so that our spirit, soul, and body may be wholly sanctified, making us ready to meet the Lord at His coming. This concerns a proper, general Christian life. The second book is Colossians, which concerns Christ and which eventually speaks about experiencing Christ. The life of experiencing Christ is a life of giving thanks in everything. Not only is the proper, general Christian life a life of giving thanks in everything, but also the life of experiencing Christ is ultimately a matter of giving thanks for all things. The third book, Ephesians, which is a sister book to Colossians, concerns the church, and at the end it speaks about the experience of the church. We can have the church life only by living in the spirit. Likewise, such a church life is a matter of giving thanks in all things.

Hence, we can see clearly that whether it is the proper Christian life, the life of experiencing Christ, or the church life, each concludes with giving thanks in all things. Our Christian life is of three stages: the general Christian life; the life of experiencing Christ, abiding in Christ, and living Christ; and the church life, the life of experiencing the Body. Every stage of our Christian life involves the giving of thanks in everything. Our Christian life becomes deformed whenever it is separated from the matter of giving thanks in all things.

The first ten years after I was saved was a life in 1 Thessalonians. As a saved one, I desired to learn to be sanctified in everything and to preserve myself daily from uncleanness that my spirit, soul, and body might be preserved and I could be ready to meet the Lord. This was the initial stage of my Christian life. As I gradually progressed, I began to study the Bible and some of the books concerning the inner life; thus, I gained more knowledge concerning Christ. I began to know Christ as my life...

After experiencing Christ in a deeper way, I began to realize that the life of experiencing Christ is not for me individually but for His church and for the testimony of the church. We have all received Christ by grace, and the result is that we are the church. Hence, eventually we need to live in the church, to have the church life. This is the deepest stage of the Christian life. All these three stages of life conclude with the matter of giving thanks in everything. Without giving thanks in all things, we cannot live the proper Christian life.

Prayer and thanksgiving are like our two feet; one foot cannot walk without the other. Prayer without thanksgiving will not work; thanksgiving without prayer also will not work. Hence, we must not only pray but also give thanks, and we must give thanks with prayer. We must do both simultaneously. It does not matter which comes first. As long as you have both, you can conveniently walk on the pathway of your Christian life. Likewise, when we take care of and nourish the new ones, we should teach them not only to pray but also to give thanks.

As you walk on the spiritual pathway, do not ask whether you should start with your right foot or with your left. Actually, to this day I still do not know which foot goes first when I walk. If you pay your attention to trying to decide which foot should go first, you will probably have difficulty in walking. Therefore, in our Christian life we should pray and give thanks, and we should give thanks and pray; we should always walk this way. Perhaps before you go to bed, you pray first and then give thanks, but in the morning when you get up, you give thanks first and then pray. Prayer and thanksgiving are the Christians' spiritual feet. If one foot is missing, walking becomes extremely difficult; if both feet are missing, walking becomes impossible. If Christians do not pray and give thanks, they cannot have a proper Christian life. (Lee, *Abiding in the Lord to Enjoy His Life*, Chap. 3, Sec. 2)

WEEK 2 – DAY 4 – THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE BEING THE TONE OF VICTORY

1 Pet. 4:12-13 Beloved, do not think that the fiery ordeal among you, coming to you for a trial, is strange, as if it were a strange thing happening to you; But inasmuch as you share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice exultingly.

Matt. 5:11-12a Blessed are you when they reproach and persecute you, and while speaking lies, say every evil thing against you because of Me. Rejoice and exult, for your reward is great in the heavens...

Some brothers raise their eyebrows as soon as trials come to them. They murmur, "Here they are again!" But Peter told us to thank God joyfully that they are here again. Whenever we praise and thank the Lord, we are above the trials. Nothing can put us above the temptations, circumstances, and difficulties more than joy, thanksgiving, and praise. This is the proper tone of victory; it is expressed in an overcomer.

A sister in Chefoo who entered the overcoming experience was under severe trials. Her daughter died within a matter of hours, and her husband was away in a distant place. When the daughter died, the brothers and sisters went over to comfort her. Although her eyes were full of tears, her face was full of joy. She said, "Thank and praise the Lord. Although I do not understand why my child is dead, I am still full of joy." The brothers and sisters tried to comfort her; instead, she comforted them. Such joy cannot be fabricated. Victory is maintained by this kind of tone. One can still praise the Lord joyfully in the midst of trials.

Let me say a word that might not appeal to you: Christians are a pattern to others on earth. God has placed us on earth as a pattern to others. If we weep when others weep and become frustrated when others are frustrated, we will become the same as everyone else. Where then is our victory? We should show the world that in the midst of these matters, we have joy and strength. We may appear crazy to them, but they will hunger after the Christ who makes us so "crazy." May the Lord be gracious to us so that we will express the victory of Christ in the midst of tribulations.

Matthew 5:11-12 says, "Blessed are you when they reproach and persecute you, and while speaking lies, say every evil thing against you because of Me. Rejoice and exult, for your reward is great in the heavens." When others reproach us, we may endure it; when they persecute us, we may not speak back. But enduring and shutting up are not enough. If we only endure and shut up, we are already defeated. The world can endure and shut up as well. The monks can do the same, and so can the scholars of Confucius. We should be different from them. When others reproach us, we should be able to say, "Praise and thank the Lord." We should consider it a joy that others reproach us. When others persecute us, we should thank and praise the Lord and consider this a matter of joy. If our victory is a genuine victory, we should rejoice and exult. If victory merely means suffering reproach, it is just human work. Human work results in suppression, while every work of the Lord results in joy and exultation.

Brothers and sisters, the test is in our tone. The greatest mistake today is that man considers endurance to be the greatest virtue. When others reproach us, can we rejoice greatly? When others reproach us, are we merely looking at the floor and shutting our mouth? There are many people who experience persecution. There are many sisters who are persecuted by their husbands. Many people experience slanders and lies. What do they do? They pray that the Lord would keep them from losing their temper or becoming angry with others. They think that as long as they do not lose their temper and do not blow up, they have overcome. But have they really overcome? It is true that they have the victory, but it is not the victory that the Lord gives. If it is the Lord's victory, they can thank and praise the Lord greatly in the midst of the reproach and persecution. Let me repeat: Whenever we find that we cannot thank and praise the Lord, we are defeated already. The tone of victory is thanksgiving and praise...

Brothers and sisters, this is the tone of victory. May God open our eyes to see that any victory that does not more than conquer is just an imitation victory. While we are suppressing and wrestling, we are only imitating victory. If Christ lives in us, we will rejoice in everything, and we will thank and praise the Lord. We will say, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord," forever. (Nee, *The Overcoming Life*, Chapter 10, Section 4)

WEEK 2 – DAY 5 – THANKING TO ENJOY THE SUBJECTIVE SALVATION OF THE TRIUNE GOD

Phil. 4:6-7 In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses every man's understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6 says, "In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." Prayer is general, having worship and fellowship as its essence; petition is special, being for particular needs. We should tell God of all that we want. Some people might say, "I tell God, but He does not answer." This is because they want things outside of God. God never answers this kind of prayer...

We should pray for such matters as our not having spiritual growth, our being short of the divine life, our not living an overcoming life, our not walking according to the Spirit, and our not living Christ. Moreover, we need to pray with thanksgiving. Instead of begging, we should pray and petition with thanksgiving. To pray with thanksgiving means that although your request has not yet been answered, you believe that you have already received it. You have faith that God will grant you what you have asked for. The result of this kind of fellowship with God in prayer is seen in Philippians 4:7: "And the peace of God, which surpasses every man's understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."

The way to experience the subjective salvation of the Triune God is to cooperate with Him. He has the bountiful supply, but you have to allow Him to supply you. He has power, but you have to be in Him. If you are not in Him, even if He has the bountiful supply and the resurrection power, they cannot be your enjoyment. Furthermore, He is operating in you, but you have to cooperate with Him and obey Him. The best expression of obedience is prayer. A proper prayer is always accompanied with thanksgiving. This means you need to pray and petition with thanksgiving. Consequently, God can operate in you to protect your inner man and guard your heart and your thoughts. In this way you will enjoy His peace and presence.

In conclusion, we need to cooperate with God. He has the bountiful supply, but we need to cooperate with Him. In other words, we need to submit to His moving within us, and we also need to pray and petition with thanksgiving. When we do this, immediately we will sense that He is operating within us and guarding us. Not only is He protecting us outwardly, but He is also guarding our hearts and our thoughts. Thus, we enjoy the subjective salvation of the Triune God. When we have this kind of enjoyment, what we live out is Christ being magnified in our body.

You have to go before the Lord and pray, "Lord, I thank You that You are the rich Spirit, who is all-inclusive and supplying bountifully. I thank You also that You are the resurrected Lord with the power of resurrection. Lord, I thank You even more that You are the God of peace who gives me peace. I want to stop all my activities; I will no longer struggle, strive, or expect to change myself. Lord, I do not want to love the world or the things that are outside of You. I just love You; I love You in singleness of heart. Lord, thank You that, as the Triune God, You are operating within me. I desire to cooperate with You to enjoy Your bountiful supply and experience Your resurrection power in me. Much more, every moment I desire to pray and petition with thanksgiving and make known to You all the things that I desire concerning being spiritual, sanctified, and victorious." Dear brothers and sisters, if you pray in this manner, you will have peace within you, and immediately you will enjoy the presence and the operation of God within you. You will truly sense that there is a power supporting you. This is enjoyment. Do not wait until a prayer time to have this enjoyment; you need to maintain a prayerful spirit the entire day.

This is why the Bible tells us to pray unceasingly. If we remain in a prayerful spirit, then we will continuously enjoy the Triune God. Today, the Triune God—the Father in the Son as the Spirit—has imparted into us all that He has accomplished, all that He is, and all that He can do. Today, we need to cooperate with Him, to obey Him, and to let Him work within us; moreover, we need to pray and petition always with thanksgiving and to speak to Him always in a prayerful spirit. Then, we will enjoy Him as life and peace. This is the enjoyment of the subjective salvation of the Triune God. (Lee, *The Subjective Experience of the Indwelling Christ*, Chapter 9, Section 4)

WEEK 2 – DAY 6 – THE PLACE OF GIVING THANKS IN THE BREAD-BREAKING MEETING

Matt. 26:27 And He took a cup and gave thanks, and He gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you.

1 Cor. 11:24-25 And having given thanks, He broke it and said, This is My body, which is given for you; this do unto the remembrance of Me. Similarly also the cup after they had dined, saying, This cup is the new covenant established in My blood; this do, as often as you drink it, unto the remembrance of Me.

In the meeting we also need to give thanks to God for His grace and for the works of grace He accomplished for us. Whereas the objects of our praise are God's doings and His virtues, the objects of our thanksgiving are God's grace and His works of grace. (Lee, *Lessons for New Believers*, Chapter 9, Section 1)

In 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 the Bible speaks of two things concerning the bread-breaking meeting. When Paul speaks of the bread in 11:24, he refers to the Lord's physical body, saying, "And having given thanks, He broke it and said, This is My body, which is given for you; this do unto the remembrance of Me." Christ's body was given up for us. Through this our sins were forgiven, and we obtained life. The basic thought in this verse is to remember the Lord. First Corinthians 10:17 provides another view, saying, "Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one Body; for we all partake of the one bread." The bread in chapter eleven denotes the Lord's physical body, while the bread in chapter ten denotes us. In other words, chapter eleven emphasizes our remembrance of the Lord, while chapter ten emphasizes our fellowship among God's children....

The bread-breaking meeting is for remembering the Lord. Since the Lord's salvation consists of two parts, the bread-breaking meeting should also have two parts. Before breaking the bread, we remember the Son. After breaking the bread, we turn our attention to the Father. The part before breaking the bread is for the Lord, and the part after breaking the bread is for God.

When we come to the Lord, we find out that we were sinners. We were sons of disobedience, sons of wrath under God's judgment. We had no way to save ourselves. But because the Lord Jesus shed His blood for our redemption, we can come before the Lord to receive His life. When we were sinners, we came to the Lord. When we saw how our sins were forgiven, we also came to Him. Hence, during the first part of the bread-breaking meeting, all our hymns, thanksgiving, and praises should be directed toward the Lord.

When we come to the Lord, we should offer thanksgiving and praises to Him. Strictly speaking, we should not do anything other than offer thanksgiving and praises. It is improper to petition for anything in this meeting. We cannot ask the Lord to shed His blood for us. This has already been accomplished; there is no longer any need to ask for this. We just have to praise and give thanks. Whether it is through praying or singing, we should only thank and praise Him. Thanksgiving is directed at the Lord's work, while praise is directed at the Lord Himself. We give thanks for what He has done, and we praise Him for what He is. At the beginning there is more thanksgiving. But gradually we turn to praise. As we give thanks we also praise. We see what a wonderful work He has done for us, and we also see what a wonderful Savior He is. After we have offered up enough thanksgiving, we should begin to praise. When our praise reaches the peak, then is the time for us to break bread.

The second part begins after we break bread. The Lord does not want us to stop once we have come to Him. We must receive the Lord, but it does not stop there. It is wonderful that the Father received us when we received the Lord. We have to be clear about this. Through the gospel, we receive the Lord, not the Father. The Bible does not say that we should receive the Father. It always says that we should receive the Son. Nevertheless, we ourselves are received by the Father. Because we receive the Son, the Father considers us acceptable. To receive the Son is the first half of salvation. When the Father receives us, salvation is complete. The Son is the One we receive; this is the first half. God is the One who receives us; this completes the other half. Hence, after breaking the bread, we go to the Father. We have received and met the Lord. Now He brings us to the Father. This is the second part of our bread-breaking meeting. We should go to God and praise Him in this part of the meeting. (Nee, *Message for Building Up New Believers*, Vol. 1, Chapter 14, Section 3)

[All ministry excerpts in this handout are from cited publications, copyright, Living Stream Ministry, Anaheim, CA. All Rights Reserved.]