

GIVING THANKS TO GOD

Joe Slater

As Christians, we are to be “giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20). Thursday is a national holiday begun for the purpose of giving thanks to God for an abundant harvest. While we might wish that giving thanks to God were the daily practice of all people, at least this day serves to remind us all to count our blessings.

Even in this time of war and national turmoil, we Americans (especially Christians) have much for which to be thankful. Virtually all of it centers around freedom. Thousands of our courageous young men and women are putting their lives on the line to protect our freedom. Whether you agree or disagree with various officials in various branches of government, be thankful that you are free to express your viewpoint vigorously. In many other places, open disagreement with the governing authorities puts your life in jeopardy.

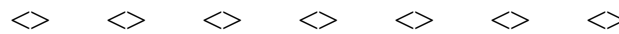
We are free to worship as we understand we should, or not to worship at all, or not even to believe if that is our decision. Again, we openly discuss and debate, but the right of free exercise may not be denied. This doesn't mean God approves of unbelief, or that all religions please Him. Nevertheless, the atheist's freedom to disbelieve is our freedom to believe. A government that can prohibit “brand X” religion (you name it) can also prohibit Biblical Christianity.

Greater than these liberties, however, is our freedom from the bondage of sin. “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.” So said our Lord in John 8:34. We live among multiplied millions of slaves, the vast majority of whom have no idea that they are slaves. They may think they are as free

as a bird, and may even pity us, thinking we are unduly restrained by the Scriptures from “having fun.” Peter described such people in his own day: “When they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage” (2 Peter 2:19).

With this Paul agrees: “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:16). This bondage to sin ends when one is baptized into Christ, where “the old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (Romans 6:5).

Thank God for freedom! May we use, but never abuse, the freedom with which God has blessed us!



The Powerful Word

“For the word of God is living and powerful” (Heb. 4:12)

God's word is powerful because:

1. It is from God, not man (1 Thessalonians 2:13)
2. Given by the Spirit, it discerns the thought and intents of our hearts (Hebrews 4:12).
3. It is not bound (restricted), 2 Timothy 2:9
4. It cleanses the heart and directs the way (especially valuable for youth), Psalm 119:9.
5. It always accomplishes God's purpose (Isaiah 55:11).
6. It is eternal, living and abiding forever (1 Peter 1:23; Matthew 24:35).

May we never be ashamed of the gospel, God's power unto salvation (Romans 1:16)!

--via RSVP Newsletter

God's Delight

"Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love" (Micah 7:18).

Merriam-Webster defines delight as "great pleasure or satisfaction; joy." Read the story of the prodigal in Luke 15 and see the joy of the father when his son came back.

"Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). Our Father will abundantly pardon! In doing so, our Father will be filled with joy beyond our imagining.

The Spirit through Paul answered the false logic: "Well, then, the more I sin, the better God looks by forgiving me." Romans 5:20-6:2 tells us emphatically no. While God delights in abundantly pardoning us, He desires that we sincerely try to change from our sinful ways. Godly sorrow demands a willingness to change and live like our Father wants us to.

The first letter of John was written to believers. Chapter 1:5-10 contains important verses for believers to understand. We are instructed to walk in God's way and not in our selfish ways. We are reminded that we will sin even after we have forsaken our old, sinful ways. However, we are assured of forgiveness and cleansing if we confess our sins to our Father.

Ezekiel 18:23 tells us that God takes no pleasure in the death of a wicked man. God's pleasure comes when that wicked man turns from his ways.

Let us give our Father great pleasure by walking in His way. When we choose to give in to temptation and sin, we need to confess our sin and ask for forgiveness, knowing that He will forgive.

--Ed Wittlif (Denver, CO)