

Giving Thanks to God in All Situations

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of giving thanks to God in all circumstances, focusing on the power of gratitude to overcome anxiety and fear. It highlights the need to seek God's kingdom first, expressing thanksgiving through presenting our bodies as living sacrifices. The speaker shares insights on humility, grace, and how to handle sickness in light of God's sovereignty and love.

Scripture: Matthew 6:25, Romans 12:1, 1 Peter 5:5, Romans 6:14, Isaiah 6:5, Lamentations 3:22, 2 Corinthians 12:7, Romans 8:37

Topics: "Gratitude in All Circumstances", "Trusting God's Sovereignty"

Description

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Transcript

Many of us have read, I'm sure, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5, 6, and 7. Have you noticed there, there was one commandment that Jesus gave, please turn to Matthew chapter 6, and in a space of about 10 verses, he repeated something three times. Now, Jesus, whenever he repeats something, it's always because he wants to emphasize the importance of it. Now, I can't think of any other passage there in the Sermon on the Mount, which he repeated three times in 10 verses, exactly the same commandment.

I don't know whether you noticed it. It says here in Matthew 6 and verse 25, For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, what you eat, Matthew 6, 25, what you drink, nor for your body as to what you will put on. Isn't your life more than food and the body more than clothing? And again, he says in verse 31, Do not worry, saying, what will we eat or what will we drink or what will we wear out? Because the non-Christians, they are the ones who are worried about all this.

And then a third time in verse 34, do not worry about tomorrow. Now, when Jesus emphasizes something or says something three times in 10 verses, it must be pretty serious. It must be something that we must take heed to.

And it's in the context of, you know, being, say, do we have enough to survive? And particularly at this time in the history of what's happening all over the world, people are thinking so much about that. How are we going to survive? And the subject here is survival. Do not worry, do not worry, do not worry.

And there are one thing here he said as a cure for it. Verse 33, it's a cure. It's a cure for worry.

Seek first, verse 33, God's kingdom and His righteousness. All these other things that you're worried about will be added to you. Added means you don't have to struggle for it.

God will just add it on to you. So I have believed that promise for many years. And I know through times of struggle, health struggle, financial struggle, everything, I said, Lord, I want to seek your kingdom first.

And I believe that all the things that the world is full of anxiety about will just get added to me without my struggling for it. Not that we don't have to work because Jesus said we have to work and we earn our bread through the sweat of our brow. There's no place for laziness in God's kingdom.

Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 3 that if a man doesn't work, he shouldn't eat. So I'm not talking about avoiding hard work. We all have to work hard to support ourselves.

But there's no need to be anxious along with our hard work. It's very important at this particular time that we live free from fear and anxiety. One of the things that Jesus would frequently tell his disciples was don't be afraid.

Why were you afraid? Very similar to don't be anxious. So fear and anxiety was something that Jesus battled or warned against as much as sin. We preach in the church the new covenant is that we don't sin.

The new covenant is also that we're not afraid and don't get anxious about anything. That's just as important. I mean just because I avoid getting angry and lusting with my thoughts and avoid murmuring and grumbling and complaining.

And at the same time, if I'm fearful and anxious, I'm just sitting in another area. I avoid the cliff on one side and fall over the cliff on the other side. So this is very, very important.

And what does it mean to seek God's kingdom first? In my early days, I thought seeking God's kingdom meant I got to do missionary work or go out and preach or something like that. But not everybody can do that. What about a mother with small children at home? How is she going to go around the world preaching? The kingdom of God is not that.

The cure for anxiety and worry, which Jesus said in Matthew 6, 33, was seek God's kingdom first. And these things you're worried about will get added on to you. You don't have to worry about them.

The kingdom of God, let me show it to you. I hope you'll never forget this. It's described in Romans 14, 17 as righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

That's it. So when you're seeking God's kingdom first, it's not going out and preaching. It is seeking, after Romans 14, 17, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

So to seek God's kingdom and his righteousness first is to say, Lord, I want you to fill me with the Holy Spirit so that I'll have righteousness, peace, and joy in my heart. Only God can do that. It's not a peace I work to myself by trying to claim this promise or that promise or remembering some verse.

We forget these things. But the Holy Spirit can bring peace in our hearts. He's the author of peace.

So the other thing I want you to see is in Philippians 4. In Philippians 4, also the apostle Paul picks up the same word that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 6. He says the same thing, Philippians 4, verse 6. Be anxious for nothing. So what is the solution he gives for that? We saw the solution Jesus gave. Seek righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit all the time.

Paul says here, if you're concerned about something, if you're worried about something, concerned about what's going to happen to you or your children or the future or anything, Philippians 4, 6, take it to the Lord in prayer. You know that song we sing, oh, what peace we often forfeit. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

So he says take everything to God in prayer. But the important point I want you to notice here is this. See, this is a command.

Be anxious for nothing but. So the solution for anxiety, to be anxious for nothing, according to Paul here, is pray with supplication. Supplication means specific request.

Prayer is general prayer. Supplication is specifically, Lord, this particular thing. And don't stop there.

There's one more thing. End your prayer with thanksgiving. When you pray, make your request specific.

Don't just say bless me. Be specific what you want and then end your prayer with thanksgiving. That means, no, normally we don't do that.

See, we say prayer and we say, Lord, this, this, this is in Jesus' name, amen. But here he says, learn to complete your prayer with thanksgiving. Thank you, Lord, for hearing me.

That's the thing that will cure you of anxiety, he says, because when you do that, the peace of God will be like a garrison, like an army surrounding your heart and protecting you from anxiety and fear. It's a wonderful thing. When you think of this, thanksgiving is something which we don't normally have in our prayer.

We pray for many things, but thanking God is something from which we can get a lot more than we prayed for. I want you to turn with me to Luke chapter 17. And you know the story of the ten lepers who came to Jesus and asked him to cleanse them.

They raised their voice, it says in Luke 17, verse 13, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And Jesus said, go and show yourself to the priest, Luke 17, verse 14. And as they were going, they were cleansed.

Now, what would you do if you had leprosy for many, many years and you had to stay outside the camp? That's the rule in those days. And you're cleansed, completely healed, you can live a normal life, go back to your family. I would think you should rush back to the Lord and say, thank you for healing me.

But these nine did not go back. I don't know why. There could be so many reasons.

Somebody may have said, I think I was already getting a little better, so this is not really a great miracle. It's so easy to write off a miracle with so many other human reasons. But one man, and that man was not a Jew, he was a Samaritan.

Jesus often spoke about the despised Samaritans as sometimes being more godly than the Jews. Remember the story of the good Samaritan? The priest and the Levite ignored that man who was beaten on the roadside. And the Samaritan went and picked him up.

And here also, the one person who comes back to thank the Lord is a Samaritan. It says here, one of them, verse 15, when he saw that he had been healed, he turned back. And with the same loud voice, Luke 17, verse 15, with which he had asked for healing, with a similar loud voice, he glorified God now.

That means his thanksgiving was as loud as his prayer. And he was a Samaritan. He fell at Jesus' feet.

Does Jesus expect us to thank him? See here in verse 17, Jesus answered and said, Weren't there ten people cleansed? Where are the nine? So today when the Lord looks down at all the prayers ascending from his people to heaven, Lord, give me this, give me that, do this for me, do this for my children, and heal me, etc., etc. Out of ten prayers, one person comes back to thank God. That proportion is probably true even today.

I wonder whether there's even one out of ten who come back and say, Lord, I'm so thankful with the same loud voice with which we pray. See, notice here, with a loud voice, he prayed saying, Master, have mercy on us, verse 13, all ten of them. One man came back and with the same loud voice, verse 15, said, Thank you, Lord, for healing me.

That's how we are to be. Prayer, specific request, with thanksgiving, you'll be anxious for nothing. And it's very often because we don't learn to thank God that we miss out on so many things God has for us.

I want to show you that right here. Some of you may not have noticed it in Luke 17. First of all, I wanted to point out to you that Jesus expects us to come back and thank him.

See, we don't have any right to expect people to come and thank us. No, it's wrong for us to expect people to come and thank us. But it is right for Jesus because he is Lord.

God is perfectly worthy to receive worship, thanksgiving. We are not worthy to receive worship, and we should not expect people to thank us. We must thank people, definitely.

We must teach our children to thank those who do something for them or give them something. But we ourselves must not expect any thanks from anybody. You remember that story? Not story, but the truth that Jesus proclaimed in Matthew 25, the day when he will come back and sit on his throne.

And it says there in Matthew 25 that, you know that story where all the nations are gathered in front of him, and he's going to separate them, and the righteous are on the right. And he's going to say to them, Matthew 25, verse 34, Come, inherit the kingdom prepared for you because, what is the reason? I was hungry, Matthew 25, 35, and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty.

You gave me something to drink. I was a stranger. You invited me in.

I was naked. You clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me.

I was in prison, and you came to me. And the righteous will answer, Lord, we don't remember that. We never saw you.

We never saw you hungry. We never saw you without clothes, or we never saw you a stranger, and we never saw you in prison or sick. When was it? And listen to this answer.

Beautiful verse, Matthew 25, verse 40. The king will say to them, I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these least brothers of mine, not the rich, well-to-do, respected ones, everybody goes and does good things for them, but to the least, to the poorest and the least, you did something for one of my children? The Lord says, you did it for me. These are my brothers.

You helped one of my brothers? Jesus said, you helped me. I remember the Lord showing that verse to me once when I was thinking of a brother whom he had helped in our church, a young brother, the early days of CFC in Bangalore. He used to come to the meetings, and his parents were family.

Nobody was converted. He was the only one. He was a college student, and he would visit us, and many times he would stay at our home after the meeting at night.

He'd get up on his own, go to the kitchen, make coffee and have breakfast and go off to college again. He treated our home like his own. We were very happy to have him for years.

And then he got a degree, and he went on and got a good job somewhere else. And for many years, I never heard a word from him. And I was so surprised.

I said, this guy whom we helped so much, he's not even written a note to us or thanked us for anything that we did. That's the day the Lord spoke to me and said, the fault is not with him. The fault is with you.

I said, Lord, what is my fault? We helped him. We did everything. The fault is you are expecting thanks from him, which means you did not do it as unto me.

You did it as unto him. Then the Lord reminded me of this verse. Inasmuch as you do it to the least of these, my brothers, you're actually doing it to me.

And the Lord said, if you've done it unto me, you don't expect thanks from that man. You didn't do it to him. You did it to me.

If you want thanks, expect it from me. So I learned something that day that when I serve other people, I'm not to expect thanks from any of them because I'm not serving them. I'm doing it as unto the Lord.

Please remember this. It'll help you. So often people say, oh, that guy was so unthankful.

Who do you think you are? Did you do it as unto the Lord or did you do it as unto a person? I learned that there's something. And after that day, I have never expected thanks from any human being or from any believer. I don't expect thanks in any way.

I serve them. I say, Lord, I'm doing it for you. So we have got no right to expect thanks from anyone.

But Jesus, he has every right to be thanked. That's why he said in Luke 18, where are the nine? Only one person comes to give thanks. I believe one of the things missing in the lives of many Christians is this attitude of thanksgiving, an attitude of gratitude to the Lord for what he's done.

And now I want you to see something wonderful here, which you may not have seen in Luke's chapter 17. When this man came and gave glory to God, you know, it says here that when you give thanks to God,

you're actually giving glory to God. How do we glorify God? One way is by thanking him.

Jesus said that in verse 18. This man has come to give glory to God. And so Jesus said, look at the reward he got.

I want you to see the reward he got for his thanksgiving. Stand up on your faith. Your faith has saved you.

That's what the margin of my Bible says. Literally, the translation there is your faith has saved you. What did the other nine get? Healing.

What did he get? Healing plus salvation. The others were healed of their leprosy and probably went to hell. I don't know.

This man got healed of his leprosy and got into God's kingdom. Why? Because he just came back and with a loud voice thanked Jesus for what he'd done. So he got a million times more than the others who only prayed.

So what I learned there is you get a lot more from God when you learn to give thanks. You know that wonderful word in Acts chapter 20 and verse 35 where it's a saying of Jesus that is not found in the Gospels. And I don't know where Paul heard it.

Paul must have heard it from one of his apostles. And it's not written in any of the four Gospels. But it says in Acts 20, 35 that Jesus said once, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

That's not in the Gospels. That's in Acts 20, verse 35. The words of Jesus.

It is more blessed to give than to receive. When we give thanks to the Lord, we get more blessing. If I were to paraphrase it, when you receive an answer to your prayer from God, praise the Lord.

That is a blessing. But when you give thanks to God for that answered prayer, it's a greater thing. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

So this is the one thing we saw in Philippians. When you pray, if you conclude your prayer with thanksgiving, it's like a garrison God puts around your heart that you're protected from anxiety and fear. There's a lot of anxiety and fear in the world today.

People are afraid they'll get sick. People are afraid that they may not have enough money to survive. You don't know how long this coronavirus pandemic is going to continue.

How long are we going to live without jobs? Businesses are closing down and so many people are suffering. I know many, many people are suffering around the world. But the children of God, I think of that lovely verse in Psalm 37.

A word of encouragement to all those who pursue righteousness. Remember the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy. This is a psalm of David.

Most of the psalms that David wrote, he wrote when he was a young man. A lot of them before he was 30 years old when he was a shepherd looking after his father's sheep. But there were one psalm that he, this is probably the last psalm he wrote when he was 70 years old before he died.

And he says in Psalm 37 and verse 25, I have been young. I love this verse. I quote it many, many times to people to encourage them.

David says, I've been young and now I'm old. But in my whole life, in all my 70 years, I've never seen a righteous man forsaking. Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit is the kingdom of God.

Seek it. Seek to be upright. Never to cheat anyone.

Never to do anything wrong. Be righteous. Be righteous in money matters.

Be righteous in your conversation. Be righteous in your work. And okay, other people who cheat may make more money than you, but you won't be forsaken by God.

Impossible. I believe that in all my life, I've never seen a righteous person forsaken by God. I can say that what David said.

And not only that, here's the blessing beyond that. I have not seen the seed of the righteous. That means the children of the righteous begging for bread.

In other words, the children of the righteous get jobs. Who are the ones who have to beg for bread? Those who don't have a job. But the seed of the righteous will never have to beg for bread.

And the seed means children, grandchildren. If you're a righteous man, your grandchildren will get jobs. They won't be begging for bread.

It's a wonderful thing to be a righteous person. And a Christian must be a testimony to this truth. I'm not anxious because I seek the kingdom of God.

I seek to be righteous in my life. I don't want one cent in my bank account which is not righteously, honestly earned. I want to pay back all my debts.

I don't want to cheat on my taxes. I don't want to do anything wrong in my life. I don't want to be unrighteous in any of my dealings with people.

Okay, people can cheat me, but I don't want to cheat them. I want to be absolutely righteous because I know then I will never be forsaken by God. I know then my children will never look for a job.

We'll never have to look for a job. They'll have it. My grandchildren will not have to look for a job.

None of them will beg for bread because I'm righteous. I want to encourage you to do, seek that, and you'll see it will be fulfilled. And the Lord is coming so soon that you may not see your grandchildren, but never mind.

You can still be a blessing in your life. You will not be forsaken, and your children won't be forsaken. It's a wonderful thing.

When they are sick, they will not be forsaken. It's a wonderful thing to learn to be righteous and to give thanks to God for everything. Always giving thanks.

Many people ask, what is the mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit? You know, so many people have so many different understandings of, how do I know I'm filled with the Holy Spirit? Well, there are a number of

things I could say, but one of the things I see here in Ephesians 5, Ephesians 5, it says here in verse 18, be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5, 18, be filled with the Spirit. And one result of being filled with the Spirit is, you want to know whether you're filled with the Spirit or not? Verse 20, always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.

Now, we can give thanks for good things. Even the worldly people will give thanks when something good happens to them. But here it says, giving thanks for everything, and not some of the time, all the time.

All the time, for all things, giving thanks. Can you make that a goal in your life? Say, Lord, I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, so that my life will not have one bit of murmuring or complaining about anything, about any circumstance or about any person. If you've got the habit of complaining about people, you're not filled with the Spirit, that's certain.

Whatever you may say, you're speaking in tongues and all that, it could be fake. If you're filled with the Spirit, you'll be giving thanks always for all things and for all people. I don't agree with them, but I'm going to give thanks for every circumstance I'm in.

Thank you, Lord, for this, that, and the other. I want to thank God for everything that comes into my life. And some of the tough things that have happened in my life, when I look back over my life, I didn't become strong during the easy times in my life, no.

I became strong through the trials God took me through. So I give thanks for them. I give thanks for my trials, because that's what made me strong.

Don't you want to give thanks to God for what made you strong? And it's when God allowed me to go through severe testings in different times, that's what made me a strong Christian. That's what gave me confidence in God. That's what gave me boldness to tell other people that you can trust God and He'll never let you down.

See, it's like these people who go to a gym to exercise. Now, every instrument in a gym, if you've gone to a gym, you'll see every instrument there, there are so many they have nowadays, is meant to put some tension on some part of your body, either your hand muscles or your leg muscles or your back muscles or your shoulder muscles. Every bit of equipment there is meant to put some tension or strain on some muscle of yours.

You say, boy, strain? Yes. That's how your muscles become strong. That's how these people who go regularly to gyms come out with strong muscles.

The people who don't subject their muscles to strain are fat and flabby. The way our muscles develop is by subjecting them to some tension and strain. It's the same thing spiritually.

That when God allows us to go through a trial, that's to make us strong. And the people who've gone through the most trials are the strongest Christians in the world. So we give thanks for all things.

There's no circumstance in which we do not give thanks. In the Old Testament, there were laws concerning giving a thanksgiving offering to God. In the Old Testament, one of the laws was to bring a tithe.

By the way, the Old Testament tithe was never money, you know that? Because they were not shopkeepers. They were not people who worked in offices and earned a salary. Tithe was never money.

Tithe was grain or cattle. Because the Israelites were either farmers or shepherds. And they would bring their, sometimes they would sell it and bring money, but otherwise they'd bring their grains and cattle.

And they had to give it to the Levites, you know, the principle of tithing in the Old Testament. Let me explain to you. There were 12 tribes in Israel.

And God said one tribe, Levi, is not going to own any land in Israel. You know why God chose the tribe of Levi, just for your information? One day when everybody was worshipping the golden calf and they came out of Egypt, Moses got so angry and he came down and said, Who will stand with me on the Lord's side? And all the sons of Levi came and stood with, at that time there were no priests, came and stood with Moses. And God and the Lord and Moses told those sons of Levi, Now go out and kill all these idolaters.

And they went out and did that. And he said, Don't spare your brother or sister or anyone. And when they stood for the Lord, they were the only tribe, the sons of Levi, who stood with Moses against this idolatry.

And therefore God gave them the priesthood. It was a great honor that for the rest of Israel's history, always the priesthood would be with the Levites. So God selected that one tribe, not by drawing a lot, but because they stood for him at a particular time.

And then these Levites were not supposed to own any property, were not supposed to do any work. So the other Israelites, the other 11 tribes, had to come and give their 10% of their cattle or grain to the Levites so that they could live. That's what the tithe was for.

Now, in the New Testament, we don't give tithes. There's no commandment to tithe after the Acts of the Apostles, Acts 2, when the new covenant began. No such thing.

And anybody who preaches that today doesn't have a clue what the new covenant is all about. It's only covetous people who keep asking others to give them their money, pastors and preachers. But what are we to give instead today? What is the equivalent of the tithe in the new covenant? See, everything in the Old Testament has got an equivalent.

For example, Egypt, from which the Israelites were delivered, is a picture of the world. Pharaoh is a picture of Satan. The blood of the Lamb is a picture of the blood of Christ, which they put on the door and which saves us.

They're going through the Red Sea in and out is a picture of water baptism. The cloud coming down from heaven is a picture of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And they're wandering in the wilderness is a picture of living under the law, defeated.

And entering Canaan is a picture of overcoming sin, victory over sin, killing the lusts of the flesh, the giants of Canaan. Everything there has got a meaning here. And what is circumcision? Is it cutting off of confidence in the flesh? What is the equivalent of the tithe in the New Testament? Let me show that to you.

How do I express my thanks to God? The Israelites express their thanks by giving money or cattle or grain, thanking God for it. In the New Testament, here is the equivalent. And this is what is not preached.

Many people are preaching the Old Testament standard of tithing. But the New Testament, it says here in Romans chapter 12, verse 1, in view of the mercies of God, here's what I'm asking you to give to God, not 10% of your income. Why does he say in view of the mercies of God? You see, he has spent 11 chapters explaining the wonderful blessing of salvation.

He starts off in the first three chapters showing that we're all sinners and works his way all the way through chapter 11 to show us what a wonderful salvation Christ has purchased for us. And then he says, in view of all that God has done for you, that's the meaning of in view of the mercies of God, what are you going to give to God as an act of thanksgiving? Thank you, Lord, for dying for me on the cross. Money? No.

God doesn't want your money. I'm probably the only preacher who preaches God doesn't want your money. He wants something more important than that.

God's not a beggar. He's the ruler of the universe. All the silver and the gold is his.

Why does he want our money? What does he want? In view of all the mercies of God, he wants your body. Present your body as an act of thanksgiving. So when we talk about giving thanks to God, here is how I express my thanksgiving to Jesus for dying for me on the cross.

I present my body to him. Now, you see, in the old covenant, the presenting of the sacrifice on the altar, they couldn't just bring a bullock and put it on the altar and give it up like that. No, the priest had to cut it up into pieces.

Now, I've often wondered if they're going to burn the thing in any case, why waste all that time cutting that bullock into so many pieces? That'll take such a long time. Why not just put the bullock on the altar and burn it and say, Lord, here's the offering? No. The Lord said, you must cut it up.

And so I see that there was a symbolism in there. Everything, as I told you in the old testament, has a symbolic meaning in the new testament. In other words, when it says here in Romans 12, I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, present your body, a living, holy sacrifice, which is the way you worship in the spirit.

You remember what Jesus told the Samaritan woman, the true worshippers who worship in the spirit? Well, here it is. This is how we worship in the spirit, by presenting our body as a sacrifice to God, but not as a full body. I have to cut it up.

Lord, here are my hands. Here are my eyes. Here's my tongue.

I offer it all to God. That's how I show my thanksgiving to God. Lord, I don't want to use my tongue or my eyes for anything sinful from now on.

So thanksgiving is not just with words. It's by offering our body, and it says in verse 2, by offering our mind. So it's more than just using words.

Words can be cheap, like they say. Lord, thank you so much, and we can go on like that. But more than words, it's the presenting of our body.

And if you have presented your body to the Lord and say, Lord, I want to show my thanksgiving to you, you gave your body for me on the cross. You didn't just say nice words. You gave your body to be crucified.

When we break bread, remember what Jesus said, this is my body broken for you. You gave your body for me. I want to give my body for you to express my thanksgiving for all that you did for me.

And when I give my body to God like that, I say, Lord, I have no more right on this body. You can do what you like. You can take it where you like.

You can do whatever you like. I will have no complaint. I believe we can be free from anxiety and fear concerning our body if you have presented it completely to the Lord.

I remember how the Lord spoke to me once through 1 Corinthians 6. It's a promise that I very often claimed for, claimed from the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 6, it speaks about food and the stomach and the body in 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 13. He's talking in verse 12 about being not being mastered by anything.

1 Corinthians 6, verse 12, he says, everything is lawful for me, but I won't be mastered. I won't allow anything on earth to master me. And then immediately he thinks of food because he knows that a lot of people are slaves to good food.

They are mastered by it. But he says, I refuse to be mastered by anything because I want only Jesus to master my life. And so he says, food, that's for the stomach.

And the stomach is for food, but one day God is going to destroy all of that. So I'm not going to worship food. You know that Paul speaks about that twice.

It's very important to recognize this. The worship of food is something that Paul, the Holy Spirit speaks about twice. One is here.

Food is for the stomach and is in the context of, I will not be mastered by the love for food. Verse 12, the last part. In Philippians 3, he talks about some people, Philippians 3 and verse 19, some people whose God is their stomach, whose God is their appetite.

They worship their appetite. They get upset if the food is not up to the mark. They worship food.

And that is a shameful thing to glory in, he says in Philippians 3, 19. But coming back to 1 Corinthians 6, he says don't worship food. But then he goes on to say don't use your body for immorality.

That's another thing people worship, sex. Food and sex are two things a lot of people worship. He says the body is not primarily meant for food and sex.

God has created these desires and used them under control. Don't be mastered by either of them. But he says here in contrast, this is what I want to show you in 1 Corinthians 6, 13.

The body is for the Lord. Give your body to the Lord. And here's the promise.

The Lord will be for your body. That's fantastic. I've many times said to the Lord, Lord, I don't want to use this body for anything other than what will please you.

My eyes, my tongue, my hands, or even if I travel somewhere, my feet. I want this body to be entirely for you. And you don't have to be a full-time Christian worker for that.

You've just got to live in purity, even if you're a mother at home. Say, Lord, my body is for you. And my body is for the Lord.

That's the way we read in Romans 12, 1. That is how I express my thanksgiving, not just with words, but presenting my body to the Lord as a living sacrifice. My eyes, my tongue, my hands, my feet, my desires, and everything. My whole body.

My body is for the Lord. And the Lord says, okay, then I will be for your body. That's a tremendous promise.

And I believe that we should claim that more. Lord, my body is for you. And I want you for my body.

And we must teach our children that. That they must give their body to the Lord. It's an act of thanksgiving for Jesus having given his body for us.

If Jesus gave his body for us, I'm not going to just give some words to the Lord. I'm going to give my body to him. That's how I express my thanksgiving to him.

And there's a promise. When my body is for the Lord, the Lord is for my body. And I prayed that many times.

I said, Lord, my body is for you. To the best of my knowledge, my body is totally yours. And I want to claim that you are there for my body.

For every need in my body. For every sickness in my body. For every physical need or anything there is a need in my body.

You are there. My body is yours. And you are for my body.

And it goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 6 verse 19, this body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. This body is for Jesus. And his Holy Spirit comes and dwells in it.

And takes, just like, you know, if you have a church building, you take care of it. This is the real church building. The body.

The Holy Spirit takes care of it. So, it's a wonderful thing to learn to give thanks with our presenting our body and our mind. And expressing thanksgiving in words.

So I was coming to the mark of being filled with the Spirit. Be filled with the Spirit. Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I remember when somebody asked me, Brother, he said, I want to speak in tongues. I said, why do you want to speak in tongues? Is it because you want to boast about it to other people? So many people want to speak in tongues for some excitement. Or to boast to others.

I also got it. God's not going to give it for that. I tell you honestly, I never in my life, well I did in my early days, seek for tongues because the Pentecostals taught that.

And I was young and foolish those days. But God never gave it to me, thankfully. Then I said, Lord, that's not what I want.

I want to live a holy life. I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that I can live a godly life. And then God gave me the gift of tongues and I was not expecting it.

I was not at all expecting it. But that's helped me a lot to thank the Lord and talk to Him when I'm under pressure. But I remember when somebody asked me, Brother, I want the gift of tongues.

I said, you know that one of the main gifts, one of the main purposes of the gift of tongues mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14 is giving thanks to God. Tongues is a means of expressing thanks. It says in Cornelius' house when they spoke in tongues, they were glorifying God.

So I said, if you're not using your English language to thank the Lord, why in the world should God give you another language? You first start thanking the Lord in your own English language. And when you get so full of thanksgiving in the English language, God may give you another language. But if you're not even using your English language to thank the Lord, why in the world should God give you another language? No.

So I've seen that this spirit of thanksgiving is so important. Many, many good things come out of it. So I want to encourage you, I want to leave that with you, and I pray that you will learn this as a habit.

Heavens will be open over you if you learn to give thanks to God. The Bible says that when we praise God, we make a throne for him. He comes to dwell in our presence as we praise him and thank him.

Let me show you this verse in closing. You know that the apostles were waiting for the Holy Spirit to come for 10 days in Jerusalem in the upper room. What were they doing for 10 days? And it's at the end of the 10 days they were suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues.

What were they doing for those 10 days? Let me show you. It's not written in Acts chapter 2. It's only in Acts chapter 1 and 2 it says they were waited, the 120 of them waited for 10 days. But if you turn to Luke 24, you see there that after Jesus ascended, the last four verses of Luke 24, the last four verses of Luke's gospel, he went to Bethany, lifted up his hands and blessed them.

And while he was blessing them, he parted and he ascended up to heaven. And they, after worshiping him, returned to Jerusalem and they went to the upper room. And what were they doing for 10 days? They were continually praising God in the temple or in the room.

They were continually praising God. They were praising God, praising God, praising God, praising God. And suddenly one day they hadn't been filled with the Holy Spirit yet.

They continually praised God with whatever language they knew. And suddenly the Holy Spirit fell on them. And God said, I'll give you another language to praise me also now.

Praise the Lord. To him who has, more will be given. If you use faithfully whatever you have, God will bless you.

You remember the story of the man who took his one talent and made 10 out of them. And God, and Jesus says in the parable, take it from that one man who didn't use his at all, give it to him. And then he said, to him who has, will more be given.

Meaning that if someone faithfully uses what he already has, God will give him more. So let's all begin by doing that which is very easy to do. To discipline ourselves.

It's a discipline to learn to thank the Lord for all things, for everything. We can even thank the Lord for what the world considers as bad things because of Romans 8, 28. God makes everything to work together for

good to those who love him.

There are so many stories I can know, I can say from my own life where things that appeared to be bad turned out for my good. Yeah. Times of pressure turned out to make me stronger.

Things that appeared to be negative turned out to be positive. And the greatest example I see is, what is the worst thing that the devil did on this earth? The crucifixion of Jesus Christ. And that was the best thing that ever happened on this earth.

See how God turned the worst thing to the best thing. So that's another lesson we learn from the cross. Not only that Jesus died for us, but on the cross the Lord turned the worst possible thing that man could do to the very best possible thing for us.

So we learn a lesson from that, that whatever bad things can happen to us, God can turn it to the best. That's why we thank God even for things which don't appear good to us. The Apostle Paul, he considered himself a murderer.

He sanctioned the murder of Stephen. And he persecuted Christians and so many things in his life. I don't know what all.

But he made expressions like, I'm the least of all the saints in the world. I'm the chief of sinners. And yet, what a wonderful way he finished his life.

Because he had a rule. He believed that the blood of Jesus cleansed him from all sin. He believed that God did not hold him responsible.

God did not remember his past, Hebrews 8, 12. And he said, Christ has become my righteousness. So he did not live always thinking of what was behind.

He says in Philippians 3, forgetting the things that are behind. If Paul had always concentrated on, Oh, I've been such a mess. I made a mess of my life.

And I did so many things against the Lord. He would never have accomplished what he did. Yeah, it's true that he did so many evil things in his ignorance, or even deliberately perhaps.

God forgave him and he glorified the blood of Jesus Christ more than he glorified this sin. People who are always concentrating on their past failure are glorifying their sin more than the sacrifice of Christ. They don't see that itself as a sin.

To glorify your own past failure more than the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, as if your sin is so great that even the sacrifice of Christ cannot cleanse it. Or as if God is a liar when he says, I will not remember your sins anymore. Or that he's a liar when he says, I have justified you in Christ, declared you righteous.

You know the meaning of being justified? We have peace with God, being justified in Christ. Justified means just as if I had been righteous from the very first day of my life. Now, I apply it to myself.

Christ is my righteousness today. I'm justified in Christ, which means all these more than 80 years that I've lived on earth, I have, in God's eyes, I'm a totally righteous person from day one. I want to believe that because God says so.

When God told Abraham, he was Abraham those days, A-B-R-A-M, when he didn't have any children, you're going to be the father of a multitude. Change your name to Abraham, father of a multitude. And think of those days there was any place where you had to go to register to change your name.

He goes to the registrar's office and says, I want to change my name to father of a multitude. And the registrar says, well, how many children do you have? I don't have any so far. He laughs at it.

But see today, he has become the father of a multitude. When you confess what God confesses, not what you feel like confessing. You see, there's a mistake that some charismatics do.

They say, just confess anything you like and it'll happen. No, I don't. I'm not preaching that.

I'm saying confess what God has said in his word. All things will work together for my good. I confess it.

And I confess that God does not remember any of my past Hebrews 8, 12. I confess it. I don't have to live in gloom over that.

And I believe that God, if he doesn't remember it. Another verse, lovely verses in Lamentations. I love this verse in Lamentations in chapter 3. You know where Lamentations is after Jeremiah.

It says in Lamentations in chapter 3, His mercies are new every morning. Lamentations 3, 22 and 23. God's mercy is new every morning.

I'll tell you how I apply that to my life. His mercy is new this morning means the Lord is saying to me, I look at you as if you have never sinned till today. I've never been merciful to you till all your life.

I've never been merciful to you today. Today, for example, if I slip up today and I say, Lord, be merciful to me. Oh, that's the first time I'm being merciful to you.

His mercies are new every morning. So I don't believe anybody, however great their sin may be, should ever live in regret or grief, continuous grief over their past failure. Yes, initially when they repent, there is sorrow and grief, but not such that paralyzes us.

It should never allow our past failures to paralyze us. That is dishonoring to God. We believe that the blood of Christ has cleansed us and justified us.

Well, it's difficult to, you know, define humility easily. I would say it's the spirit of Christ who humbled himself. But one way I can know that my humility is genuine is that I get grace.

Because God gives his grace only to the humble. He resists the proud. And if I am really humble, God will give me grace.

1 Peter 5, verse 5. And if God gives me grace, I overcome sin. Romans 6, 14. So I just put these two verses together and find out whether I'm genuinely humble or not.

1 Peter 5, 5, also repeated in James 4, 7. God gives his grace to the humble. Romans 6, 14. If I'm under grace, sin will not rule over me.

If I lose my temper, I'm not humble. Because I didn't get grace. If I had grace, I'd overcome that anger.

When I murmur and complain about something, I've not got grace. Why didn't I get grace? Because I was not humble. So for myself, through many years, this has been the test.

It's not acting humble or putting your head down or talking in humble language. That's all counterfeit garbage. To me, the only solid proof is that sin does not have power over me.

Because I'm under grace. And I can be under grace only if I remain in humility. If you apply that test, you will never be deceived.

And we shouldn't get discouraged if you slip up sometimes. I'll tell you, I've slipped up more and more in the past. Less and less as I grow spiritually.

But I remember the times when I've slipped up and said, Lord, why did that happen? And the Lord shows me some... I don't ask, why did I fall? I say, where was I proud? Because I know at that moment, if I slipped up in my thought or slipped up in a word, Lord, that was wrong. Why did I slip up? I know the reason. I didn't get grace.

And I know why I didn't get grace. I was proud. Just show me, where was I proud? That's what I ask.

Every time you slip up in any way, an angry word, a bad thought or some unrighteousness, go to God and say, ask one question. Don't ask why you slipped up. I'll tell you that now itself, because you didn't get grace.

And don't ask why you didn't get grace. That's because you were proud. Ask God the question behind all that.

Where was I proud, Lord? And if you keep asking that, you'll gradually come to the place of genuine humility, where you're continuously under the grace of God. Well, I stopped looking inward many decades ago. When I was foolish, I looked inside.

But you never find anything good in the flesh of Adam. So I stopped looking inside. And the passage of Scripture that helped me the most was in Isaiah chapter 6, that when Isaiah looked up and saw the holiness of God, that's when he saw his sin.

And it's very interesting to compare Isaiah chapter 5 with Isaiah chapter 6. If you read, I don't have time to go through the whole thing, but if you read Isaiah chapter 5, many times he says these words. Woe unto those people who are proud. Woe unto those people who get drunk all the time.

Woe unto those who call evil good and good evil. Woe unto those who are clever in their own eyes. Woe unto them, woe unto them, woe unto them.

What he said was absolutely right. As a prophet, he was condemning people who were living in those sins. But then, that's chapter 5. In chapter 6 of Isaiah, it says, I saw the Lord.

And then he says, woe unto me. This man who was condemning everybody else, suddenly he saw his own need. He says, I'm ruined because I'm a man of filthy lips.

He was convicted about the way he used his tongue. So I learned from that a lesson from my life many years ago that I will never look inside. I'll get depressed.

I look up at Jesus and I look at his earthly life and I read the Bible. I see his earthly life and I get light on myself when I look at Jesus. Jesus is the brightest light there is in this universe.

And if you look at him and look at his life, that light will shine into you and he will show you where you come short. And it's better that the Lord shows me rather than I look inside. Because if I look inside, I may not see everything wrong.

And I may congratulate myself instead of seeing that which needs to be cleansed away. See, I do not preach that Jesus will heal every sickness of yours. I've never preached that in my life because it is not taught in the New Testament.

When I say my body is for the Lord, the Lord is for my body, he gives me what I need in my body to do his will. For example, I'm more than 80 years old. If the Lord wants me to do something, he'll have to give me a certain amount of ability more than the average person who is 80 years old.

And if the Lord wants to put me in a bed and I have to do my ministry from there, I say, fine, I'm willing to accept it. The Lord is still for my body. I don't dictate to the Lord how he should handle my body.

For example, the Apostle Paul, he had a sickness which he called a thorn in the flesh. Now, I personally believe that that was an eye infection that he had, which was probably some type of pus or something that was coming out of his eyes all the time. And the reason I say that, but let me come to that later.

In 2 Corinthians 12, he called it a messenger of Satan, a thorn in my flesh. 2 Corinthians 12, verse 7. And he prayed, Lord, heal me. Take it away.

It's a messenger of Satan. I should not be having a messenger of Satan affecting my body. Take it away.

Take it away. He prayed three times and the Lord answered. If he had not heard an answer in three times, he would have prayed 300 times.

The point is not that he prayed three times. The point is he prayed until he got a word from the Lord saying, I'm not going to take away that sickness. That sickness is to humble you because you're having so many revelations, you've written scripture, you've planted churches, you're the greatest servant of God on earth.

You are in danger of becoming proud, Paul. And this is necessary to keep you humble. And the reason I say it was an eye, I think it was, I can't be dogmatic about it, but I think it was an eye sickness because it says in Acts chapter 16 that he was planning to go somewhere and then the Holy Spirit stopped him and he got stuck in a place called Galatia.

He didn't plan to go to Galatia, but because the Spirit of Jesus did not permit him to go on, Acts 16, verse 6, when they were in the Galatian region, they got stuck there. They could not move forward. The Holy Spirit stopped him.

Acts 16, 6. That is in Galatia. But we don't know in Acts 16 how he stopped him. When you come to Galatians chapter 4, he's writing to them saying, you know that the first time I preached to you, Acts Galatians 4, 13, was because of a bodily illness I had.

He calls it an illness. That means he was going through Galatia, not planning to stop there, go somewhere else and he became sick. That's what he says.

And because he was sick, he had to stay in Galatia and he preached the gospel to those Galatian region and so many people got converted. So that's one way God stops his servants from going somewhere else where they shouldn't go. By making them sick and they got to stay there.

So he says in Galatians 4, 13, because of a bodily illness, that's how I ended up preaching the gospel to you the first time. And then he says, this bodily illness of mine, verse 14, was not something that you despised. Now if it were an inward sickness like blood pressure or diabetes or something, people can't see it.

It was obviously something visible. And if it was something hidden under his clothes, it wouldn't have been visible. Must have been something on his face that was visible that people look at him and loathe him.

He says, you did not loathe it. You did not detest me for my appearance, some sickness in my face. What is it? But I bear you witness, verse 15, you would have pulled out your eyes and given it to me to replace my sick eyes.

That's why I believe that bodily illness was a sickness of his eyes, maybe some type of pus flowing down his face as he was preaching and saying, Lord, this is disgusting, people will detest me. Heal me, heal me, this is a thorn in my flesh. And the Lord said, no.

You'll be the greatest servant of God of your generation. But to protect you from pride so that I can always give you my grace, that sickness will remain. So his body was for the Lord.

And he allowed the Lord to do whatever he wanted. The Lord was for his body. And if it included illness in order to keep him humble, so be it.

So that is the balanced understanding of my body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for my body. If the Lord is going to make a sickness to prevent me from going somewhere else because he wants me to be in this place and makes me sick so that I stay here, so be it, Lord. My body is for you, and you are for my body.

Let me read one more verse in Romans chapter 8. For I am convinced that in all these things, he says in verse 37, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. In every situation, verse 35, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, or to go to Galatians 4, sickness. In all these things, we are more than conquerors.

We're not going to be defeated by any of these things. Not by tribulation, not by sickness, nothing. We're going to be more than conquerors because we are convinced that nothing will separate us, verse 39, from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

That, to me, is the balanced understanding of physical health and sickness. God will give us enough health to serve him to the end of our days, but he decides that in what way he will be for our body. And the same applies to our children.

I believe that like Paul prayed for healing from sickness, we should pray for healing for every sickness that comes to us or to our children, but then we leave it to the Lord to decide what way he'll be glorified, and we accept it. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly Father, we know that our human nature is so utterly, Adamic nature is so utterly selfish and self-centered that we never think of giving thanks.

We only think of asking, asking, asking. Deliver us from that, Lord, and help us to have the spirit of Christ, of thanksgiving to you and to one another. Help us to glorify you by this means, and help us to use our body for your glory.

We pray and present it to you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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