

# ⇒ PRAYER

## True, Gracious Thankfulness

→ Instructions at the end of the letter

Ephesians 5:20 *Be filled with the Spirit ...*

Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

→ *We want to be thankful people ... but thankfulness is a virtue that even the most evil people can feel*

### 1 What is true, gracious thankfulness?

JONATHAN EDWARDS:

1. True gratitude or thankfulness to God for his kindness to us, arises from a foundation laid before, of love to God for what he is in himself, whereas a natural gratitude has no such antecedent foundation. [The gracious stirrings of grateful affection to God,] for kindness received, always are from a stock of love already in the heart, established in the first place on other grounds... God's own excellency"

2. In a gracious gratitude men are affected with the attribute of God's goodness and free grace not only as they are concerned in it, or as it affects their interest, but as a part of the glory and beauty of God's nature.

- True, gracious gratitude is not first a delight in the benefits God gives
- True gratitude has as its foundation something else that comes first, namely, a delight in the beauty and excellency of God's character

### 2 What is "false" or "ungracious" thankfulness?

- If God's character, who he is, is not the foundation of our gratitude, then it is not above what the "natural man," apart from the Spirit and the new nature in Christ, experiences → *any person will experience this*
- Our gratitude is not true, gracious gratitude if its foundation is the worth of the gift and not the excellency of the Giver
- If gratitude is not rooted in the awesome character of God before the gift, it is probably disguised idolatry

↳ *putting the gift ahead of the giver*

→ True, gracious thankfulness is first of all thankful for who God is

### 3 God's character: grace

- A summation of what we can be thankful for:
- Grace – God's goodness towards those who don't deserve it.
- Under all the "things" we are thankful for is the character of a God who is gracious. We delight in this! What kind of a god does good to those who don't deserve it?

G. K. CHESTERTON wrote a poem musing about God's grace to those who don't deserve it:  
"Evening"

Here dies another day  
During which I have had eyes, ears, hands  
And the great world round me;  
And with tomorrow begins another.  
Why am I allowed two?

### 4 We don't deserve God's grace

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God

### 5 But God IS gracious so we should be thankful

- So, the foundation for our thankfulness is the foundation of God's graciousness to us. God's graciousness shines most brightly in the grace of redemption ⇒ GRACE is seen most brilliantly in the GOSPEL

JOHN OWEN on God's graces to us, particularly the grace of redemption:

The soul of a believer is poured out in thankful praises to him for these things, and it is sweetly affected with the duty to glorify him. There is no duty that leaves a more heavenly savor in the soul than this does.

concerning redemption

Colossians 3:17

*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

## 6 Thankful for Mike

- I have not been a part of the long history of God's ministry to this church under Mike's leadership.
- I've known him a short time: Backing up a guy with cancer
- But Mike has remained thankful. God's work in his life: thankfulness!

**C.S. LEWIS:**

*"We ought to give thanks for all fortune: if it is good, because it is good, if bad, because it works in us patience, humility and the contempt of this world and the hope of our eternal country."*

- I'm thankful for Mike's thankfulness which points towards the grace of God!
- Both my thankfulness for Mike, and Mike's thankfulness in his circumstances have as their foundation the do-good-to-those-who-don't-deserve-it character of God which we delight in!

1 Thessalonians 5:18

*Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

## 7 So, let's be people who are thankful for who God is, and what he's done!

**SPURGEON:**

*A child of God should be a visible beatitude [declaration of blessedness] for joy and happiness, and a living doxology [words of praise] for gratitude and adoration.*

⇒ This church is full of thankful people... people such as those you will see on this video