

we read in James 1:17, "that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights" and is only always on account of God's mercy and loving-kindness for Jesus' sake, the Saviour, Who gave His life to save sinners from temporal and eternal judgment from God. Unless there is conviction of sin and our unworthiness by nature and unless there is repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as only Saviour God for us, there will be no hearty, holy, happy thanksgiving before God. No, sadly so, no matter how rich you may become and how many your blessings may be in this life! But when there is conviction of sin in your life, and conversion to God in your life, there will be joyful thankful consecration before God and man in your life.

Thankless people live godless lives, unfaithful lives and unfruitful lives. The Bible says so and all history proves it so. Thankful people on the other hand, live lives so blessed and that become such a blessing too, not just in their own generation but even for the generations following too. Again, the Bible teaches us this and all history proves this as well. I challenge anyone to show it is not so.

Give thanks, give thanks, give thanks give thanks to God! Will you do so, and do you do so? Shouldn't we be truly sorry for any and every time we are unthankful? Shouldn't we so praise God for His faithfulness and mercy in reminding us even, time and again, to be thankful to Him? The much repeated reminder proves our sinfulness but His graciousness regardless for Jesus' sake. Thanks, Lord, for teaching us to be thankful and showing us from Thy Word that Thou art yet seeking that we all live lives rightly focused on Thee, really faithful before Thee, and richly fruitful unto Thee, to Thy praise and for the good of others and for our own wellbeing too. "Oh give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: For His mercy endures forever." Why not read Psalm 136 for yourself and give thanks to God in praise and worship, in word and deed, in spirit and truth, testifying with words like these based on Psalm 104:

While life shall last, my thankful lips—a song to God will raise,

And while my being I possess, my Maker I will praise.

Amen? Amen.

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BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST

Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



GIVING THANKS FOR THE CALL TO GIVE THANKS

"O give thanks unto the LORD...O give thanks unto the God of gods...O give thanks to the LORD of lords." So Psalm 136 begins, three times calling us to give thanks to the Lord God over all as revealed to us in the Bible and in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners. In Canada we have just celebrated Thanksgiving Day 2007. How good and right it is to take time to express thanksgiving to God the Lord, for after all, as the Bible so clearly teaches us, God is the Source of each and every blessing of life for body and soul that you and I may know and enjoy.

In this message, there is just one point that I want to concentrate on with you that we should be so thankful to God for. Can you guess what it might be? We should be so thankful that God in His Word repeatedly calls us to give thanks to Him. "Thanks Lord, for reminding us to thank Thee over and over again. Praise be to God that He teaches us and cares about it that you and I thank Him for all the blessings in life. Why is that so special?

Psalm 136 states four times, "Oh give thanks...give thanks...give thanks...give thanks to the Lord!" This exhortation is also found in many other places in the Holy Bible. Why should we be so thankful that God calls us and keeps reminding us to be thankful to Him? Well, don't you see with me how this shows and proves that God will have us rightly focused in life and really fulfilled in life and richly fruitful in life! Let me expand briefly on each of these points.

Being thankful to God is what leads to rightly focused living. In this psalm, the psalmist gives thanks to God in verses 3-9 as God of creation, in verses 10-22 he gives thanks for God's salvation history, followed in verses 23-25 with thanksgiving for all God's daily care and keeping for body and soul. In every verse the psalmist clearly sees and states all God's blessings as truly something always undeserved but always granted in God's mercy and loving-kindness. This is the psalm that repeats over and over, yes, twenty-six times altogether in this 26 verse psalm, "for His mercy endures forever." Psalm 136 in each verse calls for praise and thanksgiving to God and it closes with a phrase, as one writer put it, "that excites to never ending praise!"

This thankful perspective helps the psalmist, and anyone, to realize in life that we were made by God for praise and it is to His glory and honour that we should live. With God as the only Saviour God too, how much we

need to look to Him for all our salvation and how infinitely much we owe Him for His wondrous salvation so fully accomplished in the Saviour Jesus Christ and freely offered even for as many as trust and obey Him. And thinking of God as the God of daily providence Who provides His daily care and keeping of us body and soul, isn't it so that we owe thanks to Him for all His daily care for us from head to toe and from beginning to end? Giving thanks to God as is done in Psalm 136 is living in a God-dependent and God-exalting manner and living in humility and devotion before Him. It is always confessing the calling in life to live in view of the Lord and in faith before Him, in love to Him and in service to Him in accordance with all His works and ways as told us in His Word, especially also for His unending mercy and grace, which we always so desperately need.

You can be sure of this, unthankful people are always living lives out of focus with God and out of focus on what life is really about! Unthankful people forget God and even despise and deny God. Unthankful people become proud and vain, foolish and wicked even. The Lord calls us to be thankful and to give thanks to Him. How thankful we should be for this constant exhortation for with that the Lord shows us He will have us live rightly focused lives. Are you living a rightly focused life, living in humble thanksgiving before God for all His blessings to us, and acknowledging the least blessing is so undeserved, left to ourselves? "*It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord*" we read in Psalm 92, good for a right focus, yes, and good too in promotion of being really faithful in life.

When do people become unfaithful in their commitments and responsibilities whether at home, or school, or church, or at work, or in the community? Unfaithfulness In our relationships and duties and cares before God and others always is joined with being and becoming ungrateful. When you are not thankful to God for the blessings in life, you begin to complain more and more about this and that, and him and her. Ingratitude leads to grumbling and complaining about who knows what all, and the result is more and more you slack off on how you may serve others, and you think more and more instead how others should serve you. Before you know it, you are not living really faithful in any respect but living unfaithfully in different ways and degrees, making life miserable for yourself and for all those around you as well. Think about this and see if it is not true in relation to every detail of life. Being thankful and living faithfully in your responsibilities go together, and being unthankful and living unfaithfully go together as well.

God will have us live really faithful in our families and in our school work, in our daily job and in our church life before Him and as citizens in this country and world. And so He says and calls forth, "*O give thanks, give thanks, give thanks, give thanks.*" As Paul says in I Thessalonians 5:18, "*In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*" When people are truly thankful to God, counting their blessings underserved from Him even in the most difficult of situations, you will find

them living in humble devotion in their place and calling, to the best of their abilities, whatever their situation.

"Thank you Lord for calling us repeatedly and truly to give thanks to You for thereby You also show us how You would have us live rightly focused lives, really faithful lives, and also richly fruitful lives! Isn't that so true how that when people are living in humble thanksgiving to God, their lives become such a blessing and encouragement for themselves but also for so many others as well? When a person is living in humble thanksgiving before God and others, they bring cheer and they make the best of difficult times, and they look to be of loving service to others, forgetting self and living to God's praise. Think of Paul in prison so ministering to his fellow prisoners and ministering to believers all over the world because he was thankful still in adversity.

When you meet a thankful person, thankful to God especially for all His undeserved mercies day by day, then energy and love and hope and praise to God is reflected from that person and does everyone good. A thankful person makes things positive in most difficult times while a thankless person makes things negative even in the best of situations. Can't we all think of examples proving this both ways?

How much good in this life for others people who live thankful lives before God have done and still do. Think of people who have dedicated their lives in Christian service in thanksgiving to God for all His mercies and blessings in life. Think of people who have given of their abundance of resources to start and sponsor different Christian ministries of word and deed. Think of all the small and big deeds of kindness and help to others done by people out of so much thanksgiving to God for all He has done and does do for us in all our lives. Truly thankful people are most diligent people and promote so much good even when on a sick bed. Truly thankful people are prayerful people and doesn't the Bible say, "*the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man avails much?*" Truly thankful people are conscious they are never truly thankful enough, and are always looking out for and praying about being instruments for good to God's praise as the Lord gives opportunity. Truly thankful people can't do enough to God's praise and for others, always confessing it is by grace alone when we can do any good at all, and God's grace in Christ Jesus rightly calls for my life, my soul, my all!

What a joy to meet with and be with thankful people! Blessed are the family and the congregation, the country and the workplace, where the people are thankful. Being thankful as God calls us to be and gives us every reason to be makes our lives rightly focused, really faithful, and richly fruitful. Who then will not be thankful and live thankfully before God and man also in our times? I can tell you those who will not live thankfully. All people who just refuse to acknowledge that they are undeserving as sinners in themselves of the very least blessing from God let alone the flood of blessings we may have. All those who fail to realize and will not admit what