

Giving Thanks and Rejoicing... Important to God?

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Being “thankful to God” does **not** seem to be one of mankind’s strongest tendencies. Recall, if you will, the Biblical account of “the ten lepers” (Luke 17: 11-18):

Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up *their* voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

So when He saw *them*, He said to them, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

And **one** of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

So Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But **where are the nine?** Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?”

Here, there were *ten* individuals healed of a **terrible** disease! And, yet, only *one* of the ten returned immediately to give **thanks** to God.

Now... it is possible that the other nine gave thanks *later*. However, even if they did, it is obvious that their *initial* focus was **not** one of feeling—and expressing—**thanks**.

Likewise, *today* we see ingratitude all around us. In fact, Paul predicted that one of the traits of those during the end time would be that of being “unthankful.” (II Tim. 3: 1-2)

What about you and I? How often do we have our prayers **answered**... but we then **fail** to give thanks to God? How often do we receive a special **blessing**, and then **fail** to give thanks?

The **lack** of “genuine gratitude” is often *evidenced* by a person who **habitually complains**. Have you and I allowed *ourselves* to get into the habit of frequent complaining?

Consider the ancient Israelites who *wandered* in the wilderness. They are *well known* for their **complaining**. Yet, scripture tells us that such things were written *as an example for us*... that we should **not** do likewise! (I Cor. 10: 10-11).

Furthermore... most of *their* complaining was about **important** things... like lack of water or food! Yet, their complaining greatly *displeased* God! So... how much **MORE** does it displease our Heavenly Father when He hears *us* complaining about things that are *trivial*, by comparison?!

Scripture shows that it *disappoints*—and even *angers* God—when He sees that we are **more** prone to complaining **than** to giving Him thanks and praise! And, that fact can be *clearly* seen in the following passage: “Because you did not serve the LORD your God **with joy and gladness** of heart, for the abundance of everything, **therefore** you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you” (Deut. 28: 47-48).

That is quite plain, isn't it? And, again, it is written for our admonition!

Giving Thanks

We all have so *many things* to be thankful for! In fact, *a great percentage* of our “prayer time” should be devoted to giving thanks!

Do you and I thank God *daily* for our many *physical* blessings... for our **health**... for our **mate**... for our **children**... for the **parents** that we were given... for the **freedoms** that we (in most nations) have? Do we thank Him daily for the great **prosperity** that most of us enjoy? Although you probably aren't “rich” by the world's standards, most of us live like “kings” when compared to *many* individuals in the world—*and* when compared to how most people in *past* centuries lived!

More importantly, do we give daily and *heart-felt* thanks for our tremendous **SPIRITUAL** blessings? Do we thank God for our **calling**... and for our **understanding** of His truths... for the privilege of having our *personal copy* of **God's written Word**—and for His having *preserved* the Holy Bible down through the ages, despite many attempts to eradicate it!? Do we thank God for His **Church**—and, again, for His having *preserved* the Church down through the ages, despite many attempts to eradicate it? Do we thank Him for His dedicated servants down through the ages... as well as His dedicated ministry in the local congregations—of which we are privileged to be a part of?

Do we thank God for His spiritual law—which shows His **way** of life—the way of **true love**? What about the daily guidance and *protection* that God gives us... do we thank Him for that?

How *often* do we thank God for that *wondrous* **GIFT** of the **Holy Spirit**—by which Jesus Christ lives His life in us and through us, as we yield unto Him? (Rom. 8: 9-10; Gal. 2:20). And, what about that **glorious** future which awaits us in God's Kingdom?!

Lastly, how often do we *pour out our hearts in thanks* to God for that **MOST PRECIOUS** of *all* gifts—the **supreme SACRIFICE** which both God the Father **AND** Jesus Christ made, in giving Christ's *life* **FOR** us?

Yes, we all have so *very much* to be thankful for!

“Thanksgiving” and “Rejoicing”

One of the very *names* of God—“El-Shaddai”—means “Almighty **Blessor**.” In fact, the Apostle James said that God is the source of ALL our blessings! (James 1:17).

With that in mind, consider the *warning* given by God all the way back in the book of Deuteronomy: “When you have eaten and are full, then you shall **ble**ss the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God... then you say in your heart, ‘**My** power and the might of **my** hand have gained me this wealth.’” (Deut. 8:10-17).

It is only if an individual is thankful—**truly thankful**—to God, that he will have a *constant attitude* of “**rejoicing** in God.” “Thanksgiving” and “rejoicing” go hand-in-hand!

The **connection** between “thanksgiving” and “rejoicing” can be seen in the following scriptures: “Let us come before His presence with **thanksgiving**; Let us shout **joyfully** to Him with psalms” (Ps. 95:2). “Make a **joyful** shout to the LORD, all you lands! Serve the LORD with **gladness**; Come before His presence with singing... Enter into His gates with **thanksgiving**, *And* into His courts with **praise**. Be **thankful** to Him, *and* bless His name” (Ps. 100:1-4).

The Apostle Paul said, “**in everything** give thanks; for this is the will of God...” (I Thess. 5:18). Elsewhere, Paul said the following: “let us **continually** offer the sacrifice of **praise** to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving **thanks** to His name” (Heb. 13:15).

“Joy” and “Rejoicing”

Most Christians are familiar with “the fruits of the Spirit,” which are listed in Galatians chapter five, verse 22. “Love” is the fruit which is listed *first*. Yet, which fruit is listed *second*? “**Joy**”! “Joy” is listed second. And, if you were to look up the words “joy” and “rejoice” in a Bible concordance, you would probably be *amazed* at the huge *number* of scriptures in the Bible containing those words!

Within the Bible, we find The Book of Psalms. This book contains 150 Psalms, and it is virtually *filled* with praises to God!

Yes, it is very obvious that “joy and rejoicing” are very *important* to God!

As exemplified by the scriptural quotes above from Psalms 95 and Psalms 100, it is very plain that whenever we appear *before* God on the Sabbath, we should do so with great **JOY**! In fact, we are told elsewhere in scripture that God *made* the Sabbath to be a “delight” to mankind! (Isa. 58:13).

Yet, *not only* does God want us to rejoice at Sabbath services, we will now see that He wants us to rejoice (*in Him*) **continually... and ALWAYS!**

Paul admonishes us to, “Rejoice in the Lord **always**. Again I will say, **rejoice!**” (Phil. 4:4). Likewise, we read the following words from the book of Psalms:

Let all those who seek You **rejoice** and be glad in You; Let such as love Your salvation say **continually**, ‘**The LORD be magnified!**’ [Ps.40:16]

But let the righteous be glad; Let them **rejoice** before God; Yes, let them **rejoice exceedingly**. Sing to God, **sing praises to His name; Extol Him** who rides on the clouds, By His name YAH, And **rejoice** before Him. [Ps.68:3-4]

Yes, our Heavenly Father wants us to rejoice “**continually**” and “**exceedingly**”! In fact, the Apostle Peter said that we should “**rejoice with joy inexpressible**”! (I Peter 1:8).

And, what about the Apostle James? He said that we are to rejoice *even during trials!* “My brethren, **count it all JOY when you fall into various TRIALS**, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2-4).

Consider, if you will, the many **harsh trials** endured by the Apostle Paul (II Cor. 11:24-28):

From the Jews **five** times I received forty *stripes* minus one. **Three** times I was beaten with rods; once I was **stoned**; **three** times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of **robbers**, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily...

And **YET**... Paul said that the *sufferings* of this life aren’t worthy to be **compared** to *glory* that we will inherit! (Rom. 8:18).

Conclusion

Our Heavenly Father is very pleased with those who are truly **thankful** to Him... and who serve Him daily with “**joy and gladness of heart**”! Paul wisely said, “...I have learned in whatever state I am, to be **content**” (Philip.4:11). Although there is nothing wrong with trying to *improve* one’s lot in life, we—like Paul—should always feel *contentment*... and always **EXPRESS our gratitude and thankfulness** to our Creator!

We, as Christians, need to establish the habit of living lives of “*rejoicing in God*”—both **continually** and **exceedingly**—even during our trials!