

ALWAYS BE THANKFUL FOR THE GIFTS OF GOD

Peace, thankfulness, and joy. How often these things change from day to day! We can wake up of a morning feeling these things, but by the end of a hard day, when everything that could go wrong has, and we are less than peaceful, thankful, and joyful. Yet, our peace with God has not changed.

There is no need to get worked up or frustrated, but rather the opposite. The Apostle Paul reminds us, *“Do not be anxious about anything”* (Phil. 4:6). Why? Because of the lasting peace our heavenly Father has given in His Son, Jesus Christ. His death has conquered all the enemies we face - sickness, worry, death, and fear. His resurrection in the body is our peace. It signals the end of punishment and divine warfare. All accounts are settled – we stand righteous before our Father. We have been baptised into Christ’s death *and* resurrection.

Eternal death has been taken off the menu, now we shall live beyond the sleep of death. We shall rise to glory - this is true no matter what happens to our bodies in this life. The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will certainly guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. We can be safe in Christ in our hearts and minds, while our body is subject to tribulations, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities.

The source of thanksgiving is God’s Word, not our feelings or physical welfare. We are not thankful, though. We receive daily bread and a multitude of gifts - ignoring them, focusing on what we don’t have. So we must turn from false forms of security, because what we crave on earth will not give life. Do not think you can grab peace by the throat - you are not the source of life. Our sacrifices are selfish and sinful and can earn nothing but death.

We are called to focus on what is good - not just for the moment, but for all eternity. Eat not just food for the body, but feast on the gifts that come in the Word. *“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”* (1 Cor. 6:13) - and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. Read and learn Scripture - live by it - God will not lead us away from Him. Ponder it, pray it, and heed it - God’s will is food to satisfy broken hearts and distraught minds. Jesus speaks to us, wanting us to grow in knowledge and understanding. Again, Paul writes, *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect”* (Romans 12:2).

Our minds and thoughts are not to be ruled by the world and its deathly news, but by our Lord who lives to bless us. *“Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things”* (Phil. 4:8).

We must turn from what offers no hope, to our God, who is our refuge. He cares for us and protects us as our kind and good Father. Much thanks to Him! There is always never-ending thanks to be given.

But our thanks is not to be like the selfish child who only thanks because he must. We are to live lives of thankfulness to Christ, our Lord. We are called *“living sacrifices”* (Romans 12:1), not concerned about our own welfare, but safe from death and hell - not fearing earthly ruin, but living for a heavenly inheritance. These things we practice in our life, walking in the Spirit, and abiding in the Word. Our lives in Christ are ones of service and patience, not selfishness.

Without the Spirit there is no real thankfulness. We can’t make a sinful heart generous and full of gratitude. Without the true God, we have no one to thank, but are left with ourselves and our sin.

Why is thanksgiving connected to prayer? Prayer is our response to the Father for His saving Word and salvation. Without the Spirit there is no prayer heard. But our Father wants us to treat Him like a dear Father. Don’t be afraid to talk to Him constantly, with thanksgiving. Afterall, Satan does not rest - he is working hard to make us anxious, disturbed, and not at peace in our minds. There will be no lack of problems and trials - there is no everlasting peace in this world for us. We must die to thinking we can have it now - Adam’s guilt and your flesh will not allow it. Our peace is with God, but we can’t shove it in a napkin for later. We are to trust at this moment: *“the righteous shall live by faith”* (Rom. 1:17). Chew and ruminate on peace with God now that is offered by Christ. This is to have peace - with the holy God - and to be right with Him.

“Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). We either believe or disbelieve - we can’t put God on hold or give faith to another.

So be thankful for what you have, to God the Father who has given His Son for you. If you do not have many earthly gifts, the heavenly gifts are always abounding and overflowing to you. The riches of forgiveness shower you in baptism. You are new and your guilt is removed. It is done - just as Christ is risen - the sin of the world has been conquered, including yours. Grace is always abounding for you in Christ. Thanks be to God.