

## **Giving Thanks; Ephesians 5:17-21**

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1. For the free worship of God our Father.
  - a. Separatists, Puritans, and Pilgrims.
    - i. The Pilgrims were the settlers who founded the Plymouth Colony in 1620 after their voyage on the Mayflower. These people are the only group of New England colonists referred to as Pilgrims.
    - ii. Puritans wanted to reform the Church of England and “purify” it. They chartered the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1629.
    - iii. Separatists believed the Church of England could not be reformed and wanted to form new separate congregations. They established the Plymouth Colony in New England.
    - iv. Plymouth Rock.
      1. William Bradford, the leader of the Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts, wrote a journal titled *Of Plymouth Plantation*. Most scholars regard the journal as the most authoritative account of the Pilgrims and the early years of their colony.
      2. “The other partie [the Church of England], though under many colours & pretences, endeavored to have ye episcopall dignitie (after ye popish maner) with their large power & jurisdiction still retained; with all those courts, cannons, & ceremonies, togeather with all such livings, revenues, & subordinate officers, with other such means as formerly upheld their antichristian greatnes, and enabled them with lordly & tyranous power to persecute ye poore servants of God.” “*Of Plymouth Plantation*” William Bradford
  - b. Christians cannot worship or even live without fear in Iraq.
    - i. As IS was taking over, persecution was rampant.
      1. Two men were gunned down in their living room.
      2. A house belonging to a Christian family was bombed.
      3. 68 people murdered during a four-hour siege in a catholic church.
    - ii. Iraq’s Christian community has yet to recover from a decade of persecution and conflict. Before IS took large swathes of land, there were an estimated 300,000 Christians in Iraq. Now, only an estimated 154,000 remain. <sup>1</sup>
  - c. We should thank God for the ability to worship in spirit and truth here in this country.
    - i. John 4:20–24: “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”
    - ii. Give thanks for the free worship of God our Father.
2. For the defeat of our enemies.
  - a. Proclamation of 1676 by Edward Rawson.

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<sup>1</sup> “Ten Years After IS Captured Mosul, Believers Still Feel Unable to Return.” · Serving Persecuted Christians Worldwide, Open Doors, 17 June 2024, [www.opendoors.org.hk/en-US/news/latest/iraq-10-years-after/](http://www.opendoors.org.hk/en-US/news/latest/iraq-10-years-after/).

- i. On June 20, 1676, the governing council of Charlestown, Massachusetts, instructed Mr. Rawson, the clerk, to proclaim June 29th as a day of Thanksgiving.<sup>2</sup>
- ii. “The Holy God having by a long and Continual Series of his Afflictive dispensations in and by the present Warr with the Heathen Natives of this land, written and brought to pass bitter things against his own Covenant people in this wilderness, yet so that we evidently discern that in the midst of his judgements he hath remembered mercy, having remembered his Footstool in the day of his sore displeasure against us for our sins, with many singular Intimations of his Fatherly Compassion, and regard; reserving many of our Towns from Desolation Threatened, and attempted by the Enemy, and giving us especially of late with many of our Confederates many signal Advantages against them, without such Disadvantage to ourselves as formerly we have been sensible of, if it be the Lord’s mercy that we are not consumed, It certainly bespeaks our positive Thankfulness, when our Enemies are in any measure disappointed or destroyed; and fearing the Lord should take notice under so many Intimations of his returning mercy, we should be found an Insensible people, as not standing before Him with Thanksgiving, as well as lading him with our Complaints in the time of pressing Afflictions: The Council has thought meet to appoint and set apart the 29th day of this instant June, as a day of Solemn Thanksgiving and praise to God for such his Goodness and Favour, many Particulars of which mercy might be Instanced, but we doubt not those who are sensible of God’s Afflictions, have been as diligent to espy him returning to us; and that the Lord may behold us as a People offering Praise and thereby glorifying Him; the Council doth commend it to the Respective Ministers, Elders and people of this Jurisdiction; Solemnly and seriously to keep the same Beseeching that being persuaded by the mercies of God we may all, even this whole people offer up our bodies and souls as a living and acceptable Service unto God by Jesus Christ.”
- b. David prayed for victory over his enemies and thanked God when he received victory.
  - i. We don’t need to pray for victory; we already have it!
  - ii. 1 Corinthians 15:55–57: “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
  - iii. 1 John 5:3–5: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”
  - iv. What looks like a clear defeat [Jesus’s death on the cross] from the outside is a complete victory for those who belong to Christ.
  - v. We should thank God for defeating our enemies and giving us an inheritance and citizenship in the only Kingdom that will last forever.
3. For the bountiful gifts of God
  - a. Proclamation 106 by President Lincoln.
    - i. “The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed

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<sup>2</sup> “The First Thanksgiving Proclamation.” University of Pennsylvania - School of Arts & Sciences, [ccat.sas.upenn.edu/gopher/text/historical/first-thanksgiving-proclamation](http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/gopher/text/historical/first-thanksgiving-proclamation). Accessed 20 Nov. 2024.

- that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God....No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People.”<sup>3</sup>
- ii. As I looked through President Lincoln’s list of proclamations, I was amazed at how many times he declared a day of fasting and prayer.
    1. Proclamation 85 on August 12, 1861, Proclaiming a Day of National Humiliation, Prayer, and Fasting.
    2. Proclamation 88 on April 10, 1862, Proclaiming a day of Public Thanksgiving for Victories during the Civil War.
    3. Proclamation 97 on March 30, 1863, Appointing a Day of National Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer.
    4. Proclamation 103 on July 15, 1863, Proclaiming a Day of Thanksgiving, Praise, and Prayer, August 6, 1863.
    5. Proclamation 114 on July 7, 1864, Appointing a Day of National Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer.
    6. September 3, 1864, A Proclamation of Thanksgiving.
    7. Proclamation 118 on October 20, 1864, Thanksgiving Day, 1864.
    8. There were many more proclamations thanking certain individuals or groups.
  - b. God is responsible for all our blessings.
    - i. James 1:17: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”
    - ii. God deserves our thanksgiving.
    - iii. 2 Corinthians 9:10–12: “He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.”
    - iv. 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
  - c. We should thank God for providing everything we need, both material and spiritual.
4. Give Thanks Always.
- a. Ephesians 5:20: giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
  - b. Giving thanks can be so hard in our broken world.
  - c. We can give thanks for the freedom to worship God.
  - d. We can give thanks for our victory in Jesus.
  - e. We can give thanks for God’s provision and His bountiful gifts.

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<sup>3</sup> “Proclamation 106-Thanksgiving Day, 1863.” Proclamation 106-Thanksgiving Day, 1863 | The American Presidency Project, 3 Oct. 1863, [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-106-thanksgiving-day-1863](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-106-thanksgiving-day-1863).