

Three Primary Effects of the Spirit's Influence, Part 4

Ephesians 5:19-21

March 21, 2010

Tom Pennington, Pastor

Countryside Bible Church

I think it would be appropriate for us to turn again to Ephesians 5 because the next expressions that Paul uses are very much appropriate as we contemplate taking the Lord's Table together. When I was in college, I minored in English initially, and, I took several courses in the great writers of the Western world. One of them was studying the works of John Milton. Another one was studying the works of William Shakespeare. And I read, over the process of that semester (and really the years that followed) and eventually saw many of Shakespeare's greatest plays, really a profound thinker and writer, observer of men. And a number of scenes from that study still stand out in my mind, a number of scenes from some of William Shakespeare's plays. One of them is from the tragedy of "Julius Caesar." You're familiar with the story, if not the play.

Julius Caesar was assassinated by one of his close friends, a man named Brutus. And he cries out in response as he realizes what's happening, "Et tu, Brute?" You too, Brutus? You're part of the plot? And then as he's been stabbed by his friend Brutus and the reality of that begins to sink into Julius Caesar's mind, the reality of his death begins to dawn, and his life begins to fade, Shakespeare describes that moment of time like this, in response to his friend Brutus stabbing him, "This was the most unkindest cut of all; for when the noble Caesar saw him stab, ingratitude more strong than traitors' arms quite vanquished him, then burst his mighty heart; and in his mantle muffling up his face, even at the base of Pompey's statue, which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell."

In that moment, as he realized what was happening, that he was being killed by his friend, the thing that struck him most was the base ingratitude after all he had done for this man, after all that he had poured into his life. Shakespeare has him recounting, in those final fleeting moments, the amazing act of ingratitude that it was.

One of the greatest sins humans can commit against other humans is the sin of ingratitude. And yet, by how much greater order of magnitude is the sin that we commit when we fail to give God thanks? In Romans 1, Paul indicts every human being for this failure. In Romans 1, he says this, talking about unregenerate mankind, he says, "even though they knew God," [that is, God had made Himself known, He had displayed Himself in the creation, He had written His law

Available online at: www.countrysidebible.org

Copyright © 2010 Tom Pennington. All rights reserved.

Unedited transcript for personal use only.

within the hearts of every man; nevertheless, when they knew God,] they glorified Him not as God nor did they give thanks. He puts thanksgiving to God on an equal par with the failure to give glory to God. Failing to give Him thanks is as high an act of treason and rebellion as failing to give glory to our Creator, because, in a sense, they are one in the same. We fail to give God thanks because we have fallen, rebellious hearts that will not express His glory or the debt we owe to Him, because we have this sense of entitlement that springs from an inflated sense of our own self-worth. We deserve the things we get.

When we manifest that attitude, it's obvious we have no sense at all of what we really deserve from God. As Jeremiah wrote, "Why should any living mortal, or any man, offer complaint [about anything that happens in his life] in view of his sins?" Anything good we get is an expression of grace. All we deserve is God's eternal wrath. But we fail to give Him glory. We fail to give Him glory by giving Him thanks because of our fallen, sinful hearts. We grumble, we complain about our lives and our circumstances and our jobs and the people around us. We crave what He has not given us instead of giving Him the constant overflow of thanksgiving for what He has. That's what comes natural.

But according to Paul in Ephesians 5:20, the Christian who is living under the influence of God's Word and God's Spirit will have a genuine spirit of gratitude in his heart, and he will express that gratitude in heartfelt thanks to God. Where the Spirit is in control, there will be a heart of thanksgiving.

Just to remind you of the flow of the apostle's thought here, we're in a section where Paul is telling us that if we're going to walk worthy of our calling, we have to walk in biblical wisdom. And the primary way of walking in biblical wisdom is, in verse 18, being filled by the Spirit, allowing the Spirit as we studied together and understood, allowing the Spirit to fill you with a deep, illuminating understanding of the Word of God so that you're under the control of the teaching of the Scripture, and ultimately that means under the influence and control of the Spirit who inspired it.

When we are under the influence of the Spirit like that, there are definite effects and consequences in our lives. In fact, in verses 19 to 21, we learn that there are three primary consequences of being under the influence of the Spirit, in verse 19, a love for God-centered music, in verse 20, a pattern of thankfulness and in verse 21, a heart of submission. Where the Word is filling the heart under the influence of the Spirit, these will be the inevitable

consequences. And they are, at the same time, virtues and goals that every Christian should pursue.

Now last Sunday, we finished studying the first primary consequence of being filled by the Spirit with the Word, and that is a love for God-centered music. Today I want to look at the second consequence or result of being filled by the Spirit with the Word. It is a pattern of thanksgiving, a pattern of thanksgiving. Look at verse 20, “always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;” Notice, “giving thanks.” not, This verse is not a sentence in and of itself, and “giving thanks” is a participle that modifies the main verb of the sentence, which is all the way back at the end of verse 18, “be filled.”

In other words then, thanksgiving is another one of those byproducts. It’s another one of those consequences of a life under the influence of the Spirit and the Word. Where there is a person filled by the Spirit with the Word, there will be thanksgiving. I love the way John Stott says it, “The grumbling spirit is not compatible with the Holy Spirit.” They don’t go together.

Now, as we work our way through this verse, I want us to ask and answer a series of questions. The first question I want us to look at together is, why? Why should we give thanks? Here we’re told it’s a natural outflow of being filled by the Spirit. In other places, we’re commanded to do it. Why should we give thanks? Well, let me just give you a couple of biblical reasons to consider.

Number one, ingratitude is a terrible sin against God. Ingratitude is a terrible sin against God. In Luke 6:35, listen to how Jesus describes ingratitude, what He compares it to. He’s talking about God being generous and good with all people, even those who are His enemies. He says, “for He Himself” [speaking of God] “is kind to ungrateful and evil *men*.” Wow. He puts together evil as a description of mankind with the description ungrateful because ingratitude is one of the manifestations of human evil.

We already saw in Romans 1:21 when Paul indicts all of humanity for their sin against God, he says they didn’t glorify God; neither were they thankful. You ever thought about your failing to give God thanks rising to that level? In 2 Timothy 3:2 Paul says there are going to come worse and worse times as the end approaches. And in those times, he says, “... men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful....” pretty terrible list to have ingratitude included in. Ingratitude is a terrible sin against God. That’s why we ought to manifest gratitude.

There's a second reason why, and that's because Scripture assigns it a high value in God's economy. Scripture assigns a high value to thanksgiving. Let me just show you a couple of passages. Turn back to Psalm 50. Psalm 50:23, Psalm 50, a psalm of Asaph. And in verse 23, he ends the psalm with these words, "He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving..." Now, that may be a reference to the thank offering which was one of the peace offerings listed in early chapters of Leviticus, an actual sacrifice. More likely however, he's talking about offering thanks to God, expressing thanks to God. "He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving [watch this] honors Me;" When we offer thanks to God, we honor God as the giver of all things, as the source of all good.

Turn over a few pages to Psalm 69. Psalm 69:30. David writes,

"I will praise the name of God with song And magnify Him with thanksgiving."
[I'm going to magnify God with my offering of thanks. And watch verse 31.] And
it [that is, my thanksgiving] will please the LORD better than an ox *Or* a young
bull with horns and hoofs."

In other words, better than a literal sacrifice, my sacrifice of thanksgiving will please Him more. And it will magnify God. It'll let myself and others see God in the greatness that He possesses.

Turn over to Psalm 86. Psalm 86, you see it again. Verse 12, David writes, "I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And will glorify Your name forever." Now, the nature of Hebrew poetry is such that the lines don't end with rhyme. It's not based on rhyme. Hebrew poetry is based on parallelism. And so, often there is what's called synonymous parallelism; that is, one line says something. The second line says the same thing, but in slightly different words. That's what you have here. You can put an equal sign between these two lines. So, in other words, to give thanks to God with all your heart is to glorify His name, to glorify His character, to magnify Him. Wow. You and I, when we offer thanksgiving, glorify God, honor God, we magnify God, and He takes delight in our thanksgiving more than in the Old Testament times literal sacrifices.

There's another reason why we should offer to God our thanksgiving, not only because Scripture assigns a high value to it, not only because ingratitude's a terrible sin, but because God commands it. God commands thanksgiving. Psalm 50:14, "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving..."

But let's turn to the New Testament. I want you to see the priority this plays in the life of the New Testament believer. Colossians 3, this is the parallel passage to the one we're studying in Ephesians 5. And notice in the space of three verses, Paul three times tells us to be thankful. Verse 15, Colossians 3,

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.” [And then he enters verse 16, the parallel to be filled with the Spirit,] “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Verse 17, “And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name [or in the authority] of the Lord Jesus and [as you do it, whatever you do give] ... thanks through Him to God the Father.” [So, we're commanded to do this.]

Probably the most famous passage is 1 Thessalonians 5:18, where Paul says, “in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” You know, a lot of people spend a lot of time and energy trying to find God's will. Well, here's God's will, in everything, give thanks to God. It honors Him. It exalts Him. It magnifies Him. He is pleased with the sacrifice of thanksgiving. So, it's a high priority. That's why.

Let's answer a second question. Go back with me to Ephesians 5:20. Let's look in the text itself. The second question we need to ask is what? What does it mean to give thanks? What does it mean to give thanks? Well, notice Paul says “giving thanks.” That's one Greek word, not two. The word is the word from which we get the word “Eucharist.” It's “eucharisteo.” It means to give thanks. The basic idea of the word is two elements, to acknowledge benefits received, to acknowledge that I have received benefits and blessings from God, and secondly, to express true gratitude for those benefits, to acknowledge that I've received these benefits from God, and to express to God true gratitude for them.

Hendriksen, William Hendriksen, the great commentator, points out in his commentary on this passage that for thanksgiving to be expressed to God requires three things. We must personally experience blessings from God. That's true of every person. Secondly, we must recognize that nothing we have done has merited or earned those blessings; in fact, we are completely unworthy of them. And thirdly, that those blessings we have received are huge and manifold and unending. And folks, where those three things are true, we will acknowledge the benefits we have received, and we will express genuine gratitude to God. But if any one of those is missing, we won't.

Well, the first one can't be missing because we've all received amazing blessings from God. So it's one of the second two. Either we don't recognize that we are unworthy of them and done nothing to merit or earn them, or we really don't see the magnitude of what God has done for us. William Hendriksen goes on to write, "Gratitude is that which completes the circle whereby blessings that drop down into the hearts and lives of believers return to the Giver in the form of unending, loving and spontaneous adoration." We acknowledge the blessings God has poured out in our lives, and we express true gratitude for them. That's what Paul's referring to here.

That brings us to a third question, when? When should we give thanks? Look at verse 20 again, "always giving thanks to God ..." Now that doesn't mean that every waking moment we're to give thanks. That's impossible. There were times when Paul was praying or preaching the gospel to others. When Paul was preaching, he wasn't always giving thanks. So, what does it mean? By "always," he means constantly. He means it ought to be a constant pattern of our lives. It ought to be part of who we are, part of every day of our lives.

In fact, let me give you a little more specific insight into this. If you look in Scripture at when thanksgiving was offered in the lives of both Old and New Testament saints, here are a few examples. This is what he means by always. Before mealtime is an obvious one. You know, there's a preacher of a well-known church here in our area – in this case, a preacher I respect – who once said, and I remember hearing him say, "It doesn't matter if you thank God for your food before your meal; in fact, that's just become a tradition." Well, it's true. It can easily become something we don't mean, but that doesn't mean it isn't important.

If you look at the New Testament, every time Jesus is captured eating in the New Testament, He's giving thanks before He eats. Listen. Here's one example. John 6:11, "Jesus took the loaves [this is the feeding of the four thousand,], and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated ..." He does the same thing at the Last Supper. He does the same thing on other occasions.

Paul does this. Acts 27:35, Paul's on the boat, you remember. They're contemplating what's going to happen, "[Paul] ... took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and [then] he broke it and they began to eat." Romans 14:6,

"he who eats" [talking about now questionable things, whether you can eat things sacrificed to idols or not, he who eats] "does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks

to God ...” First Timothy 4:4 says, “everything” [all the food God made, everything] “created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude ...”

That was part of the life of the people of God throughout the Scriptures.

Another example is daily in private worship. What did he mean by always? Well, before the meals, that’s one place, but daily in private worship. I love the window we have into Daniel’s life in Daniel 6. You remember the story of course. The edict is passed. His enemies are trying to get him. And it says this in Daniel 6:10, “[Once he] ... knew that the document was signed, he entered his house ... and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.” Three times a day, Daniel set aside time to get alone with God in private worship and part of that was to offer to God his thanks. This was part of his daily life, part of his daily worship. It should be for you and me as well. When we set aside that time to be with the Lord, our hearts ought to be filled and overflowing with thanks to God.

It should be in all our prayers. Every time you pray, your prayer should include thanksgiving. This is what Paul says. Philippians 4:6, “Don’t be anxious for anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” You know, we’re always saying, “God, give me, give me, give me,” but our prayers are supposed to be “thank You, thank You, thank You,” at the same time. Colossians 4:2, Paul says, “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving ...” In all our prayers, there is to be thanksgiving going back to God.

It’s to be a part of the corporate worship, thanksgiving is. Psalm 35:18, “I will give You thanks in the great congregation ... among a mighty throng.” At the temple in the temple worship, there were those choirs, you remember, we talked about last time. And they were assigned the purpose in David’s time, in Solomon’s time, in Hezekiah’s time when the worship was recovered as well as in the time of the exiles returning in Nehemiah’s time. In all of those cases, we’re told they were assigned to sing in order to give thanks to God. It was part of the corporate worship to thank God.

But let’s go to the New Testament church. Turn back to 1 Corinthians 14. Now I’m not going to get in to the major issue here which is the issue of tongues. That’s a different message for a different time. Suffice it to say that the Corinthians were abusing the New Testament gift of

speaking in tongues which was nothing other than the ability to speak in a language that they had not studied. That's what happened at Pentecost. Read it carefully in Acts 2. That's what it is every other time it occurs throughout the flow of the New Testament. They were abusing that because they were using that gift in the public worship, the corporate worship, when there was nobody there who understood that language, and there was nobody there to interpret it. It was all about them and their gift.

But what I want you to see is what was part of the public worship, the corporate worship of the New Testament church as well. Look down in verse 16, "When you bless in the spirit only" [that is, when there's nobody to interpret,], "how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say "Amen" at (the) your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you're saying? For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified." If you're giving thanks to God, which was obviously here a part of the first century worship, the corporate worship of the church, and other people don't understand you, it's not benefitting them. It's not building them up. That's his point. But the point I want you to see is that the giving of thanks was part of the first century corporate worship.

You see this in Colossians. Turn over to Colossians 3 as he talks about music in the parallel passage to the one we're studying in Ephesians 5. We've looked at it several times. But notice here in verse 16 of Colossians 3, we're told corporately to "sing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." When we come together to worship God even in song, our songs are to be expressions of thanks to God.

When do we give thanks? The answer is thanksgiving should be part of the wharf and woof of our lives. It should be woven together into our lives as a constant practice in our private worship, in our corporate worship as a church, in our prayers, in all of our prayers, in our time of giving thanks before meals. It just should weave its way through our lives every day.

A fourth question we need to ask is, "for what?" For what should we give thanks? Look again at Ephesians 5:20. Paul says, "always giving thanks for all things..." Now when Paul wrote this, he was in a Roman prison. He was in a Roman prison because he had been unjustly arrested. You remember in Acts? The Jewish enemies he had in Jerusalem said he's the enemy of the law, he's the enemy of the Jewish people, and, in fact, he's even unlawfully brought Greeks, Gentiles, into the temple grounds. He's broken our law. None of that was true. But he was arrested by the Romans because of the disturbance that ensued, and he ends up having to appeal to Caesar. So,

he's in prison unjustly accused, and yet from prison he says, "'I want you to give thanks for all things.'"

Now how could he say that? How could you give thanks, how could he give thanks for injustice when God is a God of justice? It's important to understand this because this passage has often been abused and misunderstood. Paul is not saying here that we should give God thanks for those things that are contrary to His Word and to His nature. For example, we're not commanded here to thank God for our spouse's adultery, for the rape of a woman, for a child's death, for a Christian's sin, for a church's fall into division and split.

So, what does it mean to thank God for all things? It means we should thank God for everything good that we enjoy. It means we should thank God for everything consistent with His will and His plan, all of the spiritual blessings we enjoy in Christ, our salvation, sanctification, glorification. We should also thank God, and here's where it touches on evil things in our lives. We should also thank God for the fact that He can bring good even out of those evil circumstances that are contrary to both His commands and His nature. What we cannot do is thank God for the evil itself.

I like the way John Stott describes this. He writes, "God abominates evil, and we cannot praise or thank Him for what He abominates. The "everything" here, for which we are to give thanks, is to be for everything which is consistent with the loving fatherhood of God and the self-revelation He has given us in Jesus Christ." So, we don't thank Him for the evil; instead, we thank Him for the fact that He can work in and through that evil to accomplish what the person who committed it never intended. He can use even evil for our good. We can thank Him that He's so good that He can bring good out of evil.

This is what Joseph meant when he said to his brothers in Genesis 50:20, he said, "You meant it for evil ..." It was evil, the murderous thoughts of your heart are not pleasing to God. God didn't make you have those thoughts, but God used and directed them to ends you never saw and never intended. He meant it for good. So, we thank God that He can do that. Romans 8:28, "God causes all things to work together for our good...." We can give God thanks that He sovereignly orchestrates even evil events. While He's not responsible for them, He can use them for good in our lives.

I think you see a glimpse of what this looks like in Paul. Look at Philippians 1. Remember now, this is another one of the prison epistles. Paul's in prison unjustly accused, been there for a long

time, had to appeal to Caesar, will, will eventually be exonerated and freed. And notice what he says in verse 12. While the word “thanks” doesn’t occur here, I think you can see the attitude in his heart. In prison, unjustly accused,

“Now I want you to know, [this is Philippians 1:12, I want you to know] brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in ... Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the LORD because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.”

Paul says, Listen. God is so amazing He has used the injustice of my situation to accomplish amazing ends. And you can sense from his heart that spirit of thanksgiving, not for the injustice, but for the amazing character of God that can turn even evil into good. We’re to thank God for all things; that is, in all circumstances, not for evil, but for even the evil circumstances, how He can turn it to good.

We’re also to thank God for all people. First Timothy 2:1 says, “I urge that ... thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men, and for kings and all who are in authority....” Let me ask you.

When’s the last time, and I know I’m treading on dangerous ground in conservative Texas here, but when’s the last time you thanked God for the leadership of our state and of our country?” I’m not making this up. That’s right there in 1 Timothy 2:1. We’re commanded to thank God.

Sometimes the people God brings into our lives are for our benediction and our blessing. Other times He uses them for other purposes which are not so pleasant. But regardless, we are to thank Him because He’s in charge.

We’re especially to thank God for other Christians. Paul begins most of his letters this way, doesn’t he? I love that, almost every letter. It’s predictable. And it’s not just there as filler, okay? Paul wasn’t lying. Remember these books are inspired. He wasn’t doing like we do sometimes when we say, “Yeah, I’ll pray for you” and then we don’t have any intention of doing that. Paul’s saying, “I thank God for you.” Let me ask you. When’s the last time you thanked God for the Christians sitting around you, for the Christians in your life, maybe in your home? We are to give thanks for all things and all people, physical and spiritual blessings, ordinary and extraordinary, past, present and future, for things God has given, for things God has taken away, for things God has just withheld, for everything we enjoy that is good, for everything consistent

with His will and His plan, and for the fact that He can even bring good out of evil circumstances that are contrary to both His Word and His nature.

There's another question we need to ask, to whom? To whom do we give thanks? Look at verse 20, "giving thanks always for all things ... to God, even the Father." You know, many people take full credit to themselves for what they have and what they've accomplished. They consider themselves to be self-made. They believe that they alone are responsible for their success. But most people aren't like that. Most people understand that others have at least a part in their success, and so they're happy to express some degree of thanks to other people. But often, they are not happy to acknowledge the first cause of those blessings, because for human beings, ultimately all our thanks should be directed to God. Even if we thank someone else, ultimately God is responsible for that goodness in my life. He is the only true object of thanksgiving in the universe.

You know, to me that's what makes Thanksgiving celebrations such a tragedy for so many people – is they celebrate Thanksgiving, but they never really express thanks to the one person to whom thanks should be offered. As Dante Rossetti, the artist, wrote, "The worst moment for the atheist is when he's really thankful and has nobody to thank." For us who know God, our thanks is always addressed to our God, even our Father, our God as Creator, Sustainer, and our Father by redemption.

How should we give thanks? That's the question we need to ask. How? Final question, verse 20, "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..." Or as it says in a number of other places, giving thanks through Him. He is the channel through which all our thanks are offered to God (why?) because it is only through Jesus as our mediator that we can come before God at all. And every blessing we enjoy, whether temporal or spiritual, flows to us through the sacrifice of Christ. Have you ever thought about this?

Listen to John Piper, "For redeemed sinners, every good thing, indeed every bad thing that God turns for good, was obtained for us by the cross of Christ. Apart from the death of Christ, the sinner gets nothing but judgment. Apart from the cross of Christ, there is only condemnation. Therefore, everything that you enjoy is owing to the death of Christ." Every blessing you and I enjoy flows to us through Christ and His death, even the simplest of human joys.

Recently, I got home late from a meeting, and a couple of my girls were already in bed. And I went in their room after they were asleep, and I went in to give them a goodnight kiss and I just

stood there for a moment just thinking about, reveling in, God's goodness to me. You see, I don't deserve that. I don't deserve to be a dad. I don't deserve to enjoy that moment. The only thing I really deserve is God's eternal wrath, but Jesus Christ, in His death, bought that moment for me. He bought every good thing I enjoy, every other blessing of family and love and earthly joy and all of the spiritual blessings of election and salvation and justification and sanctification and glorification and eternity.

And so, I offer my thanks to God in the name of, or through Jesus Christ as the channel of my gratitude to God because of who He is and because of what He accomplished in His death and resurrection. So, Paul here is saying to us, "Whenever a person is truly under the influence of the Spirit and the word is richly dwelling within him or her, there will be a pattern of thanksgiving."

Now, I've taken much longer than I intended, but I want to give you a quick list. If expressing our thanks is so important, how can we promote thanksgiving? How can we promote this spirit? Let me just give you a real quick list, and then we will give our thanks to God in the Lord's Table.

Number one, if you want to promote thanksgiving, embrace Christ as Lord because we are all by nature unthankful, Romans 1 says. The only way we can have a thankful heart is to be changed at the most basic level, and the only person who can do that is Jesus Christ. You will be a grumbler and a complainer the rest of your life until your heart is changed by Christ.

Number two, be filled with the Spirit by the Word. Here in Ephesians 5, this thankfulness is as an overflow of being filled by the Spirit with the Word of God richly.

Number three, cultivate a sense of your own unworthiness. Remember that you're just a beggar and that everything you get from God is the overflow of His generosity. Isn't that how the Christian life begins? Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit (the beggars in spirit) ..." Remember that you're just a beggar, and you'll be happy with the generosity of God toward you.

Number four, rehearse the blessings you have received from God. Take time to rehearse God's blessings. The psalms do this over and over again. They rehearse what God has done. "What do you have that you have not received?"

Number five, review and apply the truth of God's sovereignty. If you understand God's sovereignty, you'll be thankful to Him because you'll know that whatever good you have comes

from Him and that He's in control even when the evil things come. While He didn't bring them, He can use them for good. So, if you understand God's sovereignty, it will promote thanksgiving in your heart.

Number six, believe in the goodness of God. How often does the psalm begin, "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good ..."? When you really understand the goodness of God to you, your heart'll overflow in thanksgiving.

The last one, always remember the gift of Christ in salvation. Second Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 9:15, Paul says, "Thanks be to God for His [what?] indescribable gift [speaking of Christ]."

I want you to turn to one last passage, and that's in Hebrews 13. The writer of Hebrews finishes his book, he's described everything we have in Christ, the reality that He sacrificed Himself for us, He bought everything for us at the cross. And notice how he finishes. After all of that, Hebrews 13:15, "Through Him" [that is, through Christ] "then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God" [what do you mean?], "that is [here's what I mean], "the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name."

When you really understand what you've received in Christ, it just flows back to Him in a sacrifice of praise; that is, lips that constantly thank Him for what you have. That's what the Lord's Table is all about. That's why some in the tradition of the church have called it the Eucharist. It is the giving of thanks for what God has done in Christ.

Father, we thank You for the amazing gift of Christ, the amazing gift of Your love to us in Him. We thank You, O God, that He willingly laid down His life as a Lamb for the sheep. Lord, we thank You and bless You. We praise You.

And now, O Father, even as we studied this morning, I pray that You would help the overflow of our life to be the sacrifice of praise; that is, even the fruit of lips that constantly give thanks to Your name because of all that You have done for us in Him.

For it's in His name we pray. Amen.