

REAL THANKFULNESS

by Salvatore Anastasi

Many of us have children that we do our best to teach all the good principles we preach and one of the most common is being polite by replying with a nice 'thank you' after a request is being satisfied or a treat is given. We call it the 'magic word'.

Giorgio comes running to me thirsty and says: "Water daddy please!" I give him the glass he grabs it and drinks and dad has to stop him and reminding Giorgio 'the magic word'?

We teach this to our children. We do well to teach this good principle. Most in the world recognize the NEED to be thankful to each other.

People out there are even 'trained' to say thank you: at the shops, petrol stations, in schools, in business with clients. It's good, it makes everybody feel welcomed, thoughtful, and so on. Ironically enough, as we grown up being thankful it becomes automatic to say thank you without it being from the heart.

It simply becomes a 'conventional thank you'. We kind of say it automatically without even thinking why we actually say thank you or what it really means -- what is really the purpose behind being thankful.

We as Christians are called to 'grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (**2 Peter 3:18**). We should have deeper understanding of why we should be thankful especially TO GOD and what is its purpose is.

There are plenty of scriptures which exhort us to give thanks.

Ephesians 5:20 is a well known scripture where the Apostle Paul reminds us to be:

"Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"

1 Thessalonians 5:16 says:

"In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you".

The book of Psalms is full of praises of thanks. David gave thanks to God many times showing us the humble attitude he had towards God.

So we KNOW we have to be thankful. I don't think we have a problem with that **but what does it really mean to be thankful? What does it really mean to be thankful to GOD?**

Why should we be thankful to Him? What's the purpose behind being thankful to Him?

Brethren, MY GOAL today is to exhort us all to better grasp/understand the deeper meaning behind 'being thankful' to God.

To understand the deeper meaning behind it, we can firstly look at the word itself. What does it literally mean?

WHAT does it mean? Literally!

The gentlemen at Leadership club tease me as they know I love etymology, the meaning of words. As a foreigner this doesn't mean I get them right when I speak to you. ☺

(ENGLISH)

I have done some research on the ENGLISH word 'THANKS'. The English word 'THANKS' as described in **'THE ORIGIN OF ENGLISH WORDS' dictionary by Joseph Shipley**, links interestingly the words 't-h-a-n-k' with 't-h-i-n-k' which derived from Indo-European root word **TONG. TONG** means 'to seem to one' 'to seem to me' 'it's shown to me now.'

From there the idea of 'thinking' 'thought' or if you want to link it to 'prayer', the thinking connection with GOD the Father.

"Thanksgiving", paraphrasing what the dictionary suggests, "is the result of thinking" therefore an inner understanding of gratitude toward something mostly tangible.

Think back to your calling, when the positive domino effect started in your mind. You thanked God for His calling, and you would say 'now I see/I understand' - there is that inward connection / gratitude towards HIM.

Now we use 'thank you' widely in the English speaking world to acknowledge gratitude and more in a broader sense. We lost the 'depth' of the meaning of this word!

But let's look to even older known languages to attempt to grasp the meaning behind the word 'thankfulness':

(LATIN – ITALIAN & FRENCH)

THANK YOU in Latin and therefore Italian is translated as GRAZIE. Interesting what it simply means: "GRACE", when you say 'GRAZIE' you are actually saying 'BY YOUR GRACE, YOUR MERCY'.

You see the FRENCH, also derives from Latin as well. How do they say 'thank you'? "Merci"... MERCY, GRACE... "by your concession... not deserved"

The background in history is very simple. Today we live in a society of where there is paper money, coins, credit cards, internet banking. Back then, from the first pages of humanity the exchange of goods was the most common trade used to provide your family with all necessities.

If you were a crop grower, you would go to the market or your neighbour and 'exchange', let's say your vegetables (which you had in abundance), with 'flour' from another wheat farmer or the textile producer which may not have had a vegetable garden.

Therefore, think about it, you were very thankful to the wheat farmer or the textile producer for the flour or the textile as he could have refused your goods in exchange. Just visualize the 'attitude' behind that thank you.

By accepting the 'exchange', by being thankful, you WERE really putting the other person in a higher position – you were actually saying 'I acknowledge you are granting this to me and that you could have refused to exchange. Thank you... "by your grace"... "by your gift"

Nowadays most of the time it is just a 'qualified' & conventional thank you when we buy. At the cashier in supermarket "\$6.50... thank you... next?"

Indifference is there in the face. There is a little hypocrisy there. I am not saying we shouldn't say thank you **BUT remember we all want to grasp the deeper meaning behind 'being thankful' to God and mean it truly from the HEART!**

(GREEK)

The word THANKS, THANKFUL, THANKFULNESS found in the New Testament, also used by the apostle Paul, come from the Greek word **EUCCHARISTIA**.

It's interesting to notice that **EUCCHARISTIA** is composed by two (2) words **EUCHE** (petition/thought to God, prayer, vow) and **CHARIZO** (meaning granting as a favour/as a gift, in pardon, in forgiveness)... so when you combine the two, it really means

"A PRAYER / PETITION /THOUGHT TO GOD FOR GRANTING A NOT DESERVED FAVOUR"...

That's what it means. "Thank you Father! Thank you oh my Creator for granting all I have physically but more importantly spiritually."

WE DON'T DESERVE IT!

REAL THANKFULNESS TO HIM IS REALIZING & THEREFORE AKNOWLEDGING GOD THAT HE HAS PRIVILEGED US TO TAKE OUT THE SCALES FROM OUR EYES TO SEE WHAT'S BEHIND – TO SEE THE BIG PICTURE.

We thank God (in prayer) by saying thank you for all the 'material' things we have but understanding its real meaning behind it we grasp that there is more to it. It is the acknowledgement that we don't deserve anything... especially His calling to us.

Therefore what does it really mean to be thankful? A UCG article reprint on the subject of Thanksgiving a few years ago puts it beautifully this way:

"Being thankful means that we have been IMPRESSED with a sense of kindness expressed towards us and want to acknowledge it. It means we are grateful. Thankfulness is the actual expression of our gratitude and acknowledgement of the kindness given us."

"In 1789, the first president of the U.S. wrote a Thanksgiving Proclamation. George Washington state: It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits that we may all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and HUMBLE THANKS for His kind care and protection for the great degree of tranquillity, union, and plenty which we have enjoyed and in general, [note here] for the great and VARIOUS FAVOURS, which He has been PLEASED to confer upon us that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers to the great Lord and Ruler of All Nations and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions".

Those are wonderful words that reflect a tremendous attitude of humbleness and gratitude which leads us to also ask WHY. **Why should we be thankful to Him? And what's the purpose behind it?**

God wants us to be thankful and have an attitude of appreciation. We understand that but why? Does God really need our praises? Does God really need us to say "thank you Father for all things you give us"? Does He really need that?

The reason why He wants us to DEVELOP A THANKFUL ATTITUDE is to put us in the right frame of relationship with the Creator!

Daniel prayed and thanked God 3 times daily (**Daniel 6:10**)! We tend to pray with few thanks (thank you for this or that) but then we start with a long list of things we want or need. I am not saying it's bad but He wants us to help understand that we are special to HIM because HE RESCUED us from IGNORANCE.

Do we think that because we pray, we work hard, because we are in His Church God owes us all these things? Nothing we have from God is of our own MERIT! We don't deserve anything we receive from God. It is by His grace and His mercy.

Another reason WHY He wants us to be thankful to Him and the purpose behind it is that God ties thankfulness with not being forgetful.

Especially when we have abundance we tend to FORGET to be thankful we tend to rely more on our own strength than leave it in God's hands and when we FORGET, we tend not to be more THANKFUL.

Do you remember the example of ancient Israel in the wilderness where they forgot the miracles of God's deliverance and provision and complained and murmured against God?

Deuteronomy 8:7-18 God ties lack of thankfulness with being forgetful –

“For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.

“Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest—*when* you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell *in them*; and *when* your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, *in which were* fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end— then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’

“And you shall remember the LORD your God, for *it is* He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.”

Where gratitude exists, true faith can exist. If we are not real thankful, we will forget, we will fall out of His Grace, easily leave His Body sooner or later. If we are not thankful, how can we say we are glorifying HIM?

In **Romans 1:21** Paul wrote of those who refuse to acknowledge God as our Creator:

“because although they knew GOD they did not glorify HIM as GOD, **nor were they thankful**, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened”

Thankfulness and HIS mercy are closely related. So what do we do brethren?

If we understand that there is a deeper meaning behind being thankful to God – that it goes beyond words – if we understand that thankfulness is really closely related to his mercy - all we

have is a gift freely given unto us - let us approach Him daily with that humbleness in spirit and earnestly pray as David did in **Psalm 106:1**:

“Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For HIS MERCY endures forever.”