

Thanksgiving: Physically & Spiritually

Fred Coulter—November 27, 2010

Greetings, everyone! Welcome to Sabbath services! Since this is the Sabbath after Thanksgiving, we're going to talk about Thanksgiving:

- How we need to thank God.
- How we need to understand that everything that we have—physical and spiritual—all comes from Him

—and especially when you look at the development of this society in the United States of America and see all of our productive capacity and all of the things that we can do.

I know, to avoid a lot of the things on television, we watch Discovery Channel and National Geographic Channel. I was watching how they made Peterbilt diesel truck. It's absolutely amazing! Everything is developed precisely, and they have the big frame. It takes seven and a half minutes at each station. It goes all down the assembly line, and out the other end comes a Peterbilt truck that has a luxurious cab, sleeping quarters, television; it's all padded so the sound doesn't get in there. It's all air-cushioned so you don't get all the problems of old trucks where you bounce around and it would jerk you. It is something! Then it showed the world's largest truck stop, 80-acres. In it they had every kind of food you'd want to buy, any kind of clothing you would want to buy. They had chrome trinkets, horns, bumpers, all of the accoutrements and things to make a fantastic truck. Now they're converting trucks, so they are going to run on natural gas. It will cut down their gas bill by two-thirds. They'll be able to drive them for the equivalent of a dollar a gallon—compressed natural gas. I think that's the way, probably, a lot of cars are going to go, because they're going to put in those stations.

And I got to thinking: here is this country, so blessed of God, to fulfill the promises given to Ephraim and Manasseh. And we have in every area you would want to go, we have equivalent of the *super abundance!* We all realized that when we had Thanksgiving dinner. You eat all you can and then you say, 'Oh, I couldn't eat another bite!' Then about two hours later you come back and say, 'Where's the pumpkin pie and whipped cream?'

Let's come back here to Deuteronomy 8 because this tells us something we always need to keep in remembrance. God puts us through the trials to know what is in our hearts. He wants to bless us. He wants to give us the best of everything, but how are we going to handle it, *with thanksgiving* or with *spoiled indifference* and demanding more? Here's

the whole key that God wants us to know. Deuteronomy 8:1: "All the commandments which I command you this day shall you be diligent to observe... [Today we're living in the age half-heartedness.] ...*and to do that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers....* [Now we're living it.] ...And you shall remember..." (vs 1-2).

After God tells us to remember something, what's the first thing that we do? *Forget!* Just like with Thanksgiving. Everybody says they're all thankful, but, boy, they get up a midnight and storm out and they charge down to the malls to buy everything they can buy. Even here in Hollister, Target opened at 4 o'clock in the morning. How's that for thankfulness? *or* Is that greediness? Narcissism? self-serving?

"And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God led you these forty years in the wilderness in order to humble you, to prove you... [Here's what God wants. We go through these things. This helps us to be grateful. This helps us to be thankful.] (And here's the key): **...to know what is in your heart...**" (v 2). That's the test!

- What is in our heart?
- What do we believe?
- How much do we love God?
- How much do we really follow God's way the way that we should?
- Do we take it for granted and make church a ho-hum affair?

Or

- Do we *pray* everyday?
- Do we *study* everyday?
- Do we realize that *in God we live and move and have our being*, all human beings do?

And that *we have nothing we didn't receive*. "...to know what is in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not" (v 2).

To give you an example, I didn't preach to the clerk there at the bank, the cashier. She said, 'Well, how's your Christmas going?' I said, 'Well, I'm really not into it. There are too many things that aren't true about it. I'm more into *truth* than into Christmas.' She said, 'Oh, really?' I said, 'Yeah, can't handle the things like Santa Claus is a lie, reindeers don't fly, all of those different things.' She said, 'Oh, I love Christmas.' I thought to myself: ***How perfect is the deception that you enjoy it so much that you won't give it up,***

- even if you know it's a lie
- even if you know it's from paganism

- even if you know God says don't do it.

Then, just to show you I spent a little time yesterday watching some television. I flipped up to MSNBC. What was on MSNBC? What they had was this: the entrapper of men texting for underage girls for sex. To show you the callousness of this one man—now all of them are pathetic—came in and three days later he was due in court to be sentenced for the very same thing! All of them say, 'Oh, well, it was a mistake; I shouldn't have done it.' They are not thankful to God. They have no control over their sexual behavior.

I gave the series, *Obsessed With Sex*, on Church at Home. One woman sent me an email and said, 'That was a good series. I didn't know you were so up to date on what was happening. Some man texted me and sent me a picture of his 'junk.' If I could use terminology of 'official government fondling.' Are we in Sodom and Gomorrah or not? If you would ask every one of these people, 'Does God have a commandment that says you shall not commit adultery?' *Yeah, uh huh!* 'Why don't you keep it?' *Well, it doesn't apply to me!* So they're not realizing where we got what we have, and they're all consumed in their own lusts. You could on with this with any field you would want to get in to—sports: basketball, football, hockey, soccer, ping-pong—yeah, there are ping-pong championships—volleyball, all of them They get so wrapped in that!

Do you think they would stop and keep the Sabbath? Some honor God. They make a touchdown and they point to heaven. Well, did they go to church? *No!* What are they doing?

"...to know what is in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He humbled you and allowed you to hunger, and then He fed you with manna which you did not know, neither did your fathers know *it*, so that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone; but by every *word* that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live" (vs 2-3). ***There is the whole key and substance.*** God wants to bless us based upon this. And unfortunately because we received, or let's put it this way—fortunately because of God's blessing to Abraham we have received all that we have. Unfortunately

1. We don't know who we are, the children of Israel!
2. We don't realize that God has given it to us!
3. We think, because of our ingenuity and greatness, we can do it!

Well, God has given us a long time—hasn't He? We've gone through many trials—haven't we? *As a nation*—wars, civil war, depression, all of these things. But can each generation learn the lesson and

pass it on to the next generation? What happens to the next generation? *They want to go their way!*

Verse 4: "Your clothing did not wear out on you... [no need to go to Target] ...nor did your foot swell these forty years.... [everybody had hand-me-down sandals] ...And you shall consider in your heart that a man chastens his son, *so* the LORD your God chastens you.... [No one wants any correction today. *No!*] ...And you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God to walk in His ways and to fear Him" (vs 4-6).

God wants to pour out blessings upon those who love Him and obey Him. This is what He's looking for on the earth. That's why Thanksgiving in America should be so good, because we realize from the get-go, through the Bible, that God gave this land to us.

What I want you to do is just think about contemporary America today, v 7. "For the LORD your God brings you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey, a land in which you shall eat bread without scarceness..." (vs 7-9). Have you had food rationing lately? *No! None of us have!* Maybe during the Depression there were some things. You go back to the Great Depression; that was something.

Dolores and I were watching the other night about the Dust Bowl, especially in Oklahoma. The dust would come! It would be everywhere! In every house! Through every crack! Through every window! They would accumulate dust in their lungs and get dust pneumonia; thousands of people died. You see that and you think, 'Oh, man, that was way back when with those people.' What about us today? Can we learn from that? Can we sit down at Thanksgiving meal and thank God for all that we have here? *Yes!*

"...eat bread without scarceness.... [When was the last time you looked in the cupboard and there was nothing there?] ...You shall not lack any *thing* in it.... [That's sure today—isn't it?] ...*It is* a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you may dig copper" (v 9)—you can add gold and silver, and all of the other metals, and coal and oil.

Here's a warning! Here's what we need to do. I thought about this on Thursday after I got done eating and I was stuffed full, was at the point couldn't have another bite of dressing and gravy, though it tasted good. "When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.... [And that's why on this Sabbath after Thanksgiving we need to bless God for all that He's given us. Thank Him for

all that He's given us.] (then He gives a warning): "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command you today" (vs 10-11). And every day is today. Remember the Psalm which says, 'Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart' (Psa. 95) and that's toward the Sabbath. Today—every day is today. Yesterday is gone, tomorrow hasn't arrived, today is here. And every minute of today is a new minute that you could use in a right way toward God.

"Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command you today, lest *when* you have eaten and are full and have built goodly houses and lived in *them*" (vs 11-12). You drive the length and breadth of all the countries that are the descendants of the modern ten-tribes of Israel, and what do you have? *All of this, everywhere!* What kind of house do you live in? *Goodly house!*

I remember watching a special some time ago, Medieval Houses. What was that like? Walls of mud and stone, maybe some mortar in it. In Europe—since it was cold; it was in the mini-ice age—they had walls that were two feet thick. They had little, teeny windows; they had no way of insulating. What they had for heating was a fireplace, a hearth. On that it heated the house, cooked the food, and of course, to have that for the winter. How many have gone out and cut down trees and stacked up the wood knowing that winter was coming and knowing how much you would need for that winter? They didn't have furniture like we do. Or today we can sit back in the lounge chair and have our big-screen TV, may be two or three of them, or we can take a big one divide it down, if you're a real football fan, you can divide it down into every single NFL game going and you go click, click, click, click. You know exactly what's going on with it and you're there and you're eating and your drinking and you're relaxing and all of this sort of thing, and burping. When there's a commercial, you know what that is—potty break. So there we are—isn't that us? *Yes, indeed!*

"And when your herds and your flocks multiply..." (v 13). We've had that—haven't we? Everyone of us here, every one that can hear this wherever it goes to the modern ten-tribes of Israel, you could get up after Sabbath services, run down to the market and you could buy a prime rib, chicken, turkey, goose, duck, some places goat, along with lamb. You can get milk, you can get cheese, you can butter, you can get eggs, you can get bread, you can get fresh fruit, fresh fish, whatever you want. Do we have plenty? *Well, we do!*

"...and your silver and your gold is multiplied... [that's all gone and now we have fake money] ...and all that you have is multiplied" (v 13). How many people have so much, and junk?

Dolores has a good way of getting rid of junk—extra books, or extra this—because you accumulate it. I accumulate it and Dolores tells me, 'You ordered another book?' I probably get 10-12 books a year and I read at least 10-12 books every year in addition to everything else that I do. So I've got books stacked here and books stacked there, because I'm neat and I keep everything where it should be. My filing cabinet is where the stack is. So anyway, she has a good way to do it. When she wants to get rid of things, she sits down and she goes through a whole lot of stuff—good stuff, bad stuff, junk, and all of this sort of thing. And she says, 'Is it a friend?' That is—can I use it? Is it an acquaintance, something that's just hanging around? or Is it an enemy? If it's an enemy, she gets rid of it. Then we take it right down here to the Goodwill in Hollister and they take all the stuff that was no good for us and they turn it into something good for the destitute of the land.

You know today, if you're poor, you live in a house, you have two or three televisions, you have at least one car, maybe two cars. In addition to the food you have there, you have whatever money you may earn, you have welfare, you have food stamps, you have Medicaid, all of those things. So you're all taken care of. Today, our poor are like the rich a hundred years ago. Not all countries are like this. But it's amazing, even those who live in a little tent, or a little hovel, or a little hut—guess what a lot of them have? *Cell phones and televisions!* Those who live in the other lands can receive the blessings of God if they do the same thing that God says here. But you also, then, have to take and superimpose all of that in the book of Proverbs about

- diligence
- work
- educating yourself
- being honest
- serving
- helping
- taking care of your mind

All of those things are all in the Bible, because the Bible is the book from God to tell you how you live your life. That's what it is!

Verse 13: "...and all that you have is multiplied, Then you become haughty of heart... [lifted up with pride] ...and you forget the LORD your God Who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage" (vs 13-14). *And that's what has happened!* That's why we have the book that is coming, *Lord, What Shall I Do?* And we

have a little bit more that we're adding to it before we go to publication, so it's good that we didn't rush off to start publication right away. We may do it in a couple weeks, but there was an article about 'leavers.' The 'leavers' are the ones who are saying, 'We're leaving the Church. We're leaving religion.' A lot of them don't believe in God, not because of God, but because of the conduct of the people who say they believe in God—whether sanctimoniously *self-righteous good*, which is hard to take; or *hypocritical*, that they have the same sins that everybody else has and they're not supposed to; or that they have so denigrated from the pulpit the Bible that no one wants to believe it anymore.

I'm convinced that they don't hate God as much as they hate religion. Like one man said, 'Well, the Bible says true religion. Why do you have the series, *Why God Hates Religion?*' Listen to the sermons! True religion in James 5 has nothing to do with the heart and conversion, it has to do with the outward action so you need to understand the whole book of Job really, the whole purpose behind it, to understand that too many people take things which look good, that sound good, that takes parts of the Bible, leaves other parts of the Bible out, and they create a religion—and then what happens? *They don't have the Spirit of God and they can't meet the standard that God has given!* That's what happens.

So people get all angry and mad at God—not God's fault! But every one of them has a Bible in their house, maybe more. But when was the last time they read it? And even those who have the Bibles and know about God and read their Bibles:

- Do you take it as such a blessing that you read it and study every day?
- Do you take the blessing that God has called you to pray to Him every day?

All of those things are all included in this. Too much of Christianity is empty religion, it doesn't fill people. May make them feel good at first, but what they've discovered is, as many people come into church, the same amount or more leave. It's hard to keep them in church more than five years. When you consider all they get is the same sermon over and over and over again, with a few varieties, no wonder they get disillusioned and give up.

So it shows this: All the good intended people that use the Bible, as long as they're seeking God, because there are seven Spirits of God that are seeking those who are seeking God, there will be blessings and benefits to a certain point as long as you keep seeking God. But then there comes a time when you stop. When you stop, then one of the seven Spirits of God then leaves you and you're on your own and you wonder, 'Well, what has happened here?' And you really don't understand that you have been brought part way, but you have

never been brought to the understanding of repentance and true baptism to receive the Holy Spirit of God. So that's what happened here.

Then He says, v 16: "Who fed you in the wilderness with manna which your fathers did not know, so that He might humble you and that He might prove you to do you good in your latter end." Think of that! Every trial and difficulty you go through, and God is doing it to *prove you, to test you, to know* what is in your heart. Do you really God? *Because that's the whole thing*—right? Love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul and being. *Yes, indeed, true!* "...to do you good in your latter end." And what is the greatest good, the ultimate greatest good that God can do? Not just the physical things, because the physical things do not accomplish spiritual things.

- you cannot have the *love of God* by owning something
- you cannot have the *joy of God* by having something new
- you cannot have the *hope of God* or the *faith of God* unless you love God and keep His commandments and have His Spirit

Then the greatest good He can do is eternal life, and that's why we're here—eternal life. "Beware lest you say in your heart... [Isn't this exactly what has happened? You listen to every one of these politicians and religious leaders about how they're going to recover from all of this. 'I have faith in the American people.' **Where's the faith in God?**] ...Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of *my* hand has gotten me this wealth'" (v 17).

Isn't that what a lot of people say? 'We just need to go to our better self.' What is your better self? How long are you going to stay with your better self unless you have the Holy Spirit of God to what? *Circumcise your heart and overcome the evil that's within!* Can only go so far. You can discipline yourself and do so much. You can have rules that you follow and yes, they are good, but does it lead to God? *No!*

Verse 18, here's what we need to remember: "But you shall remember the LORD your God, for *it is* He Who gives you power to get wealth, so that He may confirm His covenant which He has sworn to your fathers as it is this *very* day. And it shall be if you do at all forget the LORD your God and walk after other gods serving them and worshiping them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish—*yes, perish*. As the nations whom the LORD destroys before your face, so you shall perish because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God" (vs 18-20). So, that's quite a warning!

It's good on Thanksgiving that we can say the Thanksgiving Sabbath, because we have Thursday, Friday, and Sabbath—we're still eating on the turkey—so we can include it all today. Thank God for it! There it is. "...obey the voice of the Lord your God."

Let's look and see some of the things in the New Testament that are special blessings above this, special blessings above the physical things. Let's see the spiritual blessings that we need to thankful to God for and how precious those are. I think it's very interesting if we look and understand that God is doing something very profound in the world. Not just fulfilling prophecy—and this thing on China is going to be bigger than we ever thought, really, really is. Wait until I bring a sermon on that here pretty quick.

The publishing of the Bible and the number that are being published and the languages that they are being published in. Remember when I've said before in the past, God is not going to fulfill a prophecy to its bare minimum. He's going to fulfill the prophecy to its absolute maximum. So when He says, 'And this Gospel shall be published in all the world'—what does that mean to its absolute maximum? And if the return of Christ is going to affect everyone on earth—which it is—is God going to make it possible for every person to have a Bible so they will have no excuse? *Think on that!*

But for those who answer the call—'many are called, but few are chosen.' Here's something to really be thankful for, above and beyond any physical thing you can think about or own or possess or devise—any amount of money that you could have in the world—think of this. Here's one of the greatest blessings to be thankful for:

Matthew 11:25: "At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and have revealed them to babes.'" That's what we are. We're the weak of the world. We're the off scouring of the world, but God has called us, revealed these things to us; it has to be revealed. You can study all the books in the world, but unless God reveals it to you, how's it revealed? *With His Spirit and by His Word.*

"Yes, Father, for it was well pleasing in Your sight to do this. All things were delivered to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father neither does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son personally chooses to reveal Him" (vs 26-27). Now that's something—isn't it? How great is that? *This spiritual action in our lives, brethren!*

- you don't have to worry about trying to be smart

- you don't have to worry about trying to be wealthy
- you don't have to worry about any of those things

except:

- obeying the voice of God
- keeping His commandments
- yielding to Him

—to understand the most precious thing that has been revealed to us: Who the Father is—isn't that something?—and the relationship that we can have with the Father. I've covered that in several sermons here recently.

Here's what He says. Here's what we need to do, v 28: "Come to Me, all you who labor and overly burdened, and I will give you rest.... [Rest from what? *All the sins that ruined and destroyed your life before this was revealed to you and you repented.*] ...Take My yoke upon you... [He will give you His Spirit to carry it] ...and learn from Me... [walk in His footsteps; follow His example; believe His words.] ...for I am meek and lowly in heart..." (v s 28-29). Isn't that true?

On Church at Home I'm going to follow up on *From a Speck of Dust to a Son of God, Why Were You Born?* I'm going to follow it up with how fantastic it was what God through the one of Elohim Who became Jesus Christ to divest Himself of His glory, His power, and everything like that, to become a pinpoint of life in the womb of the virgin Mary and to be born as a baby, as a human being. So, if you think that God's asking you to humble yourself, for you to put away the things that mean so much to you, ***think of what Jesus did and be thankful for that.*** Who did He do it for? For Himself? *No!*

- He did it to save mankind
- He did it to raise up His church
- He did it so that there would always be those who would be called who would be—through the power of God's Holy Spirit through the Father—be qualifying, because of the Father, to eternal life

That is the greatest blessing of all! We will see how we're to respond to that.

(go to the next track)

Let's see the attitude and thing, especially the book of Psalms will teach us. Go through the book of Psalms. The book of Psalms is the key for study on your knees as you are praying to develop your relationship with God, because that is the important thing. You have to have knowledge. You have to have God's Spirit. You have to have feeling and emotion, motivated by the Spirit of God; not the false thing that comes with Pentecostalism, rolling

on the floor, jumping up and down, and all of that sort of thing.

So here in Psalm 31:19, the more that we understand about God and His greatness and His love and His goodness for us, the more that we really appreciate it in loving God. Because love has to do with

- knowledge
- obedience
- the Spirit of God
- emotion

That's why we are told to *love God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all of our being*. Why don't you use that as kind of a formula the next time you get kind of in a rut and humdrum, and wondering what to do to return to God, start right there about *how to love God with all your heart and mind and soul and being*.

Psalm 31:19: "Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who take refuge in You before the sons of men!" Isn't that interesting. We are called *out* of the world, but we live *in* the world and we're sanctified by the Truth of God—right? *Yes!* God isn't going to take us out of the world, but notice what He's going to do, something that is invisible that the rest of the world cannot see, which is a great blessing to thank God for.

Verse 20: "You shall **hide them in the secret place of Your presence** from the plottings of man; You shall **hide them in a shelter away** from the strife of tongues." Think about that! How tremendous this is! This is a spiritual blessing and quality that comes from God because of your relationship with Him because you love Him with all your heart and mind and soul and being.

Verse 21: "Blessed is the LORD, for He has shown His wondrous lovingkindness in a besieged city." I think we're going to see that in the future—right? That God will spare those who love Him, send His angels to camp about them, to deliver them out of trouble, minimize the trouble for them.

"For I said in my haste, 'I am cut off from before Your eyes;' nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried to You.... [Let's understand what a supplication is. A prayer is a petition, praying to God. A supplication is a deep, heart-felt, and in some cases, very tearful plea beseeching to God.] ...You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried to You. O love the LORD, all you His saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, and fully repays the proud doer" (vs 22-23).

That's why you have to put the wicked in God's hands. Today we see wicked on television,

what happened? A lot of us react! They can't hear you on television. Even one man was so upset with what was on television, he got out his shotgun and shot the television, was arrested for it. An endangerment of other people and he's going to spend a few weeks in the local 'hoosegow.' *Put the wicked in God's hands!* Don't shout and yell and scream at them. It isn't going to change them. Today we live in a time when strangers are rising high within Israel. Don't be frustrated, just get out of their way. Don't accuse them; they're fulfilling a prophecy from God. So what we need to do is yield to God so that we don't come under that.

"...The LORD preserves the faithful, and fully repays the proud doer" (v 23). Jesus said that you 'love your enemy. Pray for those that spitefully use you and persecute you, so that you may be the children of your Father in heaven.' How do you pray for your enemy?

1. *that God would convert them*. It's possible. Look at Saul
2. *that God would keep you from their evil devisings*
3. *that if none of the two begin to happen, then number three, pray that God will deal with them directly*
4. *that God will bring their own devices upon them to destroy them in their own traps*

You don't have to get mad at them, shoot the television, throw the radio across the room. Here's what to do instead:

"Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the LORD" (v 24). Now that's something, see. That's why we're to be strong in the Lord and in His way. That's why going through and taking the Psalms—reading and studying them on your knees as you begin praying—will begin to bring a lot of things to your mind on how you need to pray, things you need to pray about, how much then you can begin to love God, draw close to Him.

One of the ways to be thankful is to always keep in remembrance what I've said. I remind myself of this many times during the week, almost daily: *you have nothing you didn't receive*, and that *in God we live and move and have our being*. As you heard me say in a lot of sermons, and I'm going to mention it here again, remember Hezekiah when he got lifted up in heart. What did God do to test him? *He left him!* I take that as a warning, because there are so many things out here in the world to pull people away. Stay close to God. Remember who and what you are—nothing but dust.

Psalm 69:24, concerning the enemy. "Pour out Your indignation upon them, and let the fierceness of anger take hold of them. Let their

encampment be desolate; let none dwell in their tents, for they persecute him whom You have stricken, and they recount the grief of those You have wounded.... [this is of Christ directly—all of Psa. 69 is of Jesus Christ—read and study this whole Psalm.] ...Add iniquity unto their iniquity, and let them not come into Your righteousness.... [These are those who have completely cut themselves off from God.] ...Let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be written with the righteous” (vs 24-28). Is that praying for your enemy? *Yes! The unconverted, the unrepentant!*

Now notice the contrast. You don't lift up and exalt yourself when that happens. “But I am poor and sorrowful; let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high.... [Christ is going to be resurrected.] ...I will praise the name of God with a song and will magnify Him with thanksgiving.... [We're going to see all the things we can be thankful for, for God when we finish this sermon.] ...This also shall please the LORD better than a bullock that has horns and hoofs. The humble shall see and be glad; and your heart shall live, you who seek God” (vs 29-32).

Now here's a promise. You feel cut off, you feel you have problems, you feel they're more than you can handle? Notice what God gives as a promise and what you do is, you claim the promise and say, ‘O God, here is a promise that you have given. Not because of any righteousness that we have, but because of God's goodness and mercy.’

“For the LORD hears the needy and does not despise His prisoners.... [those who are in difficult times and in hard places] ...Let the heavens and earth praise Him, the seas, and everything that moves in them” (vs 33-34). You think about that the next time you watch some of these things like Blue Earth, migrations, and things like that, and all that God has done with all these things in the world. Dolores and I were watching the other night, think of all the things that we can see from television that we would never have the opportunity to see. There are men out there doing these things and I think God directly causes them to do it so there would be some things recorded to glorify God and be where anyone can see them.

This really struck me. They actually have crews of people, scientific people that track whales; these were humpback whales. There's a certain place in the Pacific Ocean that is their cavorting and courting and mating section in the ocean. They got there when a young male and young female were cavorting. They were singing love songs to each other. They were swimming by and caressing each other side-by-side. They were under the water taking all of these pictures and just left all these men alone, didn't even bother them. They were so enraptured in whatever sex drive and love thing that whales do, I can't imagine that. I don't know how to figure out

how that works. But I thought—isn't that something? Everything that there is, everything in the seas, everything that moves in them—praise God! And all I could do is just sit there and say that to myself. Look at what God has done.

“For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah; so that they may dwell there and possess it. And the seed of His servants shall inherit it... [That's us; we are the seed of His servant Christ.] ...and those who love His name shall dwell in it” (vs 35-36). That's New Jerusalem. That's amazing to understand.

Now let's look at Psalm 107:17; here shows God's mercy and then the thankfulness that we are to have to God when He delivers us. “Fools are afflicted because of their rebellion and because of their iniquities.... [Have you been foolish? Have you been afflicted, because of doing things that are not right? *Yes, indeed!* ‘Because of their rebellion and their iniquities.’] ...They themselves loathed all kinds of food... [I don't know exactly what that means] ...and they drew near the gates of death” (vs 17-18). In other words, because of their iniquities they were so sick that they couldn't even stand to eat any kind of food. ‘Drew near to the gates of death.’

Now notice God's mercy and kindness. “Then they cried unto the LORD in their distress, and He delivered them out of their troubles.... [God delivers us from all our fears, and from all our troubles—*His way!*] ...He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.... [Doesn't that sound like God calling you to repentance and baptism and so forth?] ...Let them praise the LORD for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing!” (vs 19-22). That's how we are to respond to God.

Now let's look at some of the things in the New Testament that we are to do, we're to be thankful for, and how God deals with us. 2-Thessalonians 1:1: “Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of *the* Thessalonians, *which is* in God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.... [Remember what we covered about the Spirit of God, of Christ and the Father dwelling in us.] ...Grace and peace *be* to you from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ” (vs 1-2). That's what God wants to give us all the time:

- grace—which is favor
- mercy
- kindness
- forgiveness
- relationship with God
- peace

A carnal mind is enmity against God and is warring against God. When you have grace and peace you're in harmony with God, you love God, you believe Him, you believe His commandments, and so forth.

Verse 3: "We are duty-bound to thank God always for you, brethren, even as it is fitting, because your faith is increasing abundantly, and the love of each one of you is abounding toward one another." So this is what we need to have in the Churches of God. Why don't we just all cease our fighting among each other? Start loving God, start loving one another and see what kind of blessings will come from God.

Let's see some of what the Apostle Paul said here, 1-Timothy 1:11—Paul wrote this just a short time before he died; he was in prison: "According to the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God..." What happened in Paul's life was this: Rather than get weary of well-doing and rather than becoming lukewarm as a Laodicean, he grew to love God more. He grew to have more of God's Holy Spirit and to appreciate everything that he had gone through, because it was all for the glory of the gospel and serving God.]

"...with which I was entrusted." That's the same way with all of us, but especially to those who are teachers. Being able to be a teacher is not an exultation; it's a demotion, because now you're doubly responsible.] ...And I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, Who has empowered me, that He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, Who was previously a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent person; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief" (vs 11-13).

Here's a good example: You always remember the lessons of the past while not living in the past. You understand the difference? You put all of that under the blood of Christ, but you learn the lesson. ***Don't relive the past!*** This is a very important thing for all of those who've had very traumatic things happen in their lives. Learn the lesson; don't relive it. Actually, this is how they are able to help those who come out of war. Not strangely enough, but very interestingly, there is a whole new movement to help the veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan to forget those things. How do they do it? *By giving something to them that loves them—a dog!* And even a hardened criminal. They train those dogs. They showed one man who lost the use of his legs, trained the dog to take off his socks, help him put them on, open the refrigerator, close it, bring him a bottle of water, turn on the light switch. And the dog was always right there. They kept asking: Why are these dogs this way? *God made dogs so that even the worst person in the world will have a friend and can learn the beginning of love, because the dog is unconditional. If you love the*

dog, it'll love you, be loyal to you. You've heard how many stories of what dogs have done to rescue people. Even one story of about a dolphin and a dog where the dog got thrown overboard and the owner didn't know it. The dog and dolphin had made friends out there in the ocean somewhere, and when the dolphin found out that the dog was in the water, came over and got the dog on its back and came back to where the boat was. Next time you see a dolphin, kiss it.

We do this when praying: ***We bring every thought into captivity to God and ask Him to cleanse our minds with the washing of the water of the Word!*** How can that be done? God's Word, when we read it, brings an affect to our minds—coupled with the Holy Spirit—which actually reprograms our minds. Did you know that? That's why God's laws and commandments are to be written in our hearts and in our minds, ***that is a converted mind!***

Now notice what Paul said here, v 14: "But the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with *the* faith and love that *is* in Christ Jesus.... [After he remembered the lesson of the past, how he was saved out of that, through the grace and love and mercy and faith of God] ...*This is* a faithful saying, and worthy of full acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (vs 14-15). And he didn't get all lifted up.

The truth is this: Paul, through his life until the time he died, actually thought less and less and less of himself. He started out by saying, 'I was the last of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle.' He ended up by saying that in Eph. 3, that 'he was less than the least of all the saints,' which is a perfect example of how Christ said, 'The one who is great among you, let him be the servant of all.' And the one who is great is the one who humbles himself, like Paul did.

But notice, why he brought this up, v 16: "But for this reason I was shown mercy in order that in me first Jesus Christ might demonstrate all longsuffering, for an example to those who would afterwards believe on Him unto eternal life." Quite a thing! God is working in each of our lives in a very similar way: ***to change us; to convert us!***

We need to be thankful for all of that of what God is doing. Now let's come to Colossians 2, and then when we close we will finish up by listing all the things we need to be thankful for. These are all the spiritual things of God.

Colossians 2:6: "Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord... [We can say today 'according to how the Bible teaches us.' Isn't it an amazing thing, so many people don't believe in God and want to reject God and they don't understand

that God has a personal book, a message to you, that you can get for free, if necessary, to know about God, if only you would.] ...be walking in Him... [That means be living your life in Christ.] (How?): ...Being rooted... [It's like a plant.] ...and built up in Him..." (vs 6-7). A plant automatically knows what to do. When you trim the branches, more grow. When the leaves are cut off, more grow. So if we're rooted and built up in Him, we're building our character, we're building our love.

"...and being confirmed in the faith, exactly as you were taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (v 7). So stop and think: What one thing has God the Father, Jesus Christ—Old Testament or New Testament—commanded us to do that isn't right? Now being carnal, He asks us to forsake things, not love the world, not be filled with lust and pride. All the things that He's given for us to do are good.

Then we have a little guarding to do, v 8: "Be on guard so that no one takes you captive through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ.... [compared to every other religion and philosophy in the world] ...For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and **you are complete in Him**... [Don't need other religions.] ...Who is the Head of all principality and power" (vs 8-10).

You, me, all those that God has called and have the Spirit of God through the Holy Spirit of God, are connected to the greatest Source of power in the universe.

- Do you understand that?
- Can we with love and hope and everything overcome those things? *Yes!*
- Do we have carnality to overcome? *Yes!*

But be thankful in it and ask God to help you in everything.

Colossians 4:2: "Continue steadfastly in prayer..."—*pray without ceasing* (1-Thess. 5). What does that mean? *As you grow in grace and knowledge and love toward God, you will become more dependent upon God; you will also realize that only God can help you. Yes, you have to get out and do your part, but only God can help you. What happens? You end up praying many times in the day just while you're going along doing your ordinary things that you do.* 'God, help me with this. God, help me with that.' Repent of this thought, the temptation that comes along. And remember, every thought or temptation comes along is not a sin.

Remember the *Twelve Steps to Sin* that we covered? You expel it right away. If you get something stuck in your brain—have you ever had

something stuck in your brain that just keeps going over and over and over? How do you get rid of that? *You get on your knees, you repent of it, you ask God to cleanse your heart, cleanse your mind, give you forgetfulness and take it away from you. **God will!*** You may have to continue to pray that until such time that it's gone, but it will be gone.

Always remember this with prayer: A lot of repetition is necessary because the prayers have yet to be answered. You keep praying until the prayers are answered. A vain repetition is something that is toward something that is not God, like the heathen. Don't use vain repetition. Who are they praying to? *Stupid idol!* But there are a lot of things that we pray about that need to be prayed about daily.

- Do we pray daily, *God, forgive us of our sins?*
- Do we pray daily, *Bless our food?*
- Do we pray daily, *Keep us from the evil one?*

Isn't that necessary every day? *Yes.* Like one man who said, 'Well, I've been faithful so long, Satan has no interest in me.' BANG! The greatest mistake he made was just like Hezekiah, at the end of his life and God left him. But just like Hezekiah, he repented! So here it is right here. "Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving" (v 2). Always remember that **God is the One Who gives us everything.**

Let's come back here to Philippians 4. You've heard what is said, the power of positive thinking. The power of positive thinking does work, but the power of positive thinking—with the Holy Spirit—brings about tremendous changes in heart, mind, attitude, relationship, thoughts toward other people, etc.

Philippians 4:6: "Do not be anxious about anything... [*overly* anxious, *overly* concerned about anything] ...but... [here's how you put it in God's hands]: ...by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God in everything." Over a period of time, and over a period of years, you're going to look back and see how God has answered your prayers. You're also going to look back and see that part of the answered prayers that God gave you were some of the trials that you went through so He could continue answering prayers that you have in the future. That's why we are where we are right now, because of this very process.

And notice what happens. Here is the greatest thing that people in the world do not have, but could have. "And the peace of God... [That's what you want. In the world they express it 'peace of mind.' But it is God Who gives you peace inwardly.] ...And the peace of God, which surpasses all

understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus” (v 7). The Holy Spirit there is a power to strengthen you, to guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. So here’s how to do it. When something happens that’s not good, learn from the lesson, put it out of your mind, and go on.

Verse 8: “Finally, brethren, whatever *things* are true, whatever *things* are honorable, whatever *things* are just, whatever *things* are pure, whatever *things* are lovely... [How’s this for the power of positive thinking? Is not the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Truth? And isn’t that the most powerful positive thinking that you could have? *Yes, indeed!*] ...whatever things are of good report; if *there be* any virtue and if *there be* any praise, **think on these things** (v 8). Not only think on them, but act upon them.

Now, let’s see the things that we are to be thankful for. We can add some more things to this. I’ve got quite a long list, but let’s start out.

Be thankful for:

- *God the Father and Jesus Christ*
- For Jesus Christ *for doing what He did* to become the sacrifice for our sins, to be our Savior, to be the head of the Church
- For God the Father *for His great love* that He has loved us and called us.

Isn’t that a fantastic thing that God would deal in our lives?

- *For all the creation of God*, the heavens and the earth.

Because all of those were made so that we, on this earth—of all the places in the universe and the very few that He has called—because ‘many are called, but few are chosen and you see your calling brethren, how that many wise, etc. are called.’

- *God has called us*, be thankful for that
- That you are *made in the image and likeness of God*.

A little lower than God—isn’t that amazing? All the abilities and things that God gave to all human beings

- *for our calling to repentance*
- *calling to have our sins forgiveness*
- *calling to receive eternal life* at the return of Jesus Christ

These are all things that are above and beyond anything physical. The physical things come in later. Just like we learned at the beginning, God wants to bless us with all the physical things, but first let’s acknowledge God with all the spiritual things.

- The *blessing of the Holy Spirit*
- The *begettal to be a son or daughter of God*

- The *Holy Spirit* to lead us and guide us
- The *Spirit of Truth* which gives us the ability to discern right from wrong, good from evil
- *God’s Word*—thankful today that we have the whole Bible

If you don’t have the video, *Israel of the Alps*, you can order it. Just call in, write in, whatever you want, email us and we’ll send it to you. They did a work for God having mostly the book of John. Now different sections of the *Israel of the Alps*, they had more or less different parts of the New Testament. But that little bit that they had—and they went out and preached the Gospel doing that two-by-two. So you look at what they did and then pick up your Bible, you have the whole Bible, and ask yourself the question: What does God want us to do with what He’s given us? **And be thankful for it!** We have the whole Word of God.

All of the things that I’ve mentioned above here, all of these things, are for the greatest thing possible. You combine all of this together in one package and that is that we can have a relationship with God, from the least in the world to the greatest in the universe. Think of that! *That’s what God has created and devised for us*. So then we can be thankful to God for all of these things. **The greatest thing then is our relationship with God, that we know:**

- we can get on our knees and pray to God and He will hear us
- when we study His Word, He will speak to us
- with the Spirit of God in us and the Spirit of Truth in us
 - ✓ He will lead us
 - ✓ He will guide us
 - ✓ He will help us
 - ✓ grant us His love

Be thankful for:

- His love, because He loves us
- the love that He gives to us that we can love Him
- the faith and the hope
- answered prayer

all of that. So that is really something, brethren, that God has given us to do.

Let’s close here by going to Colossians 3 and let’s see how we are to put this in our lives. I want you to read the whole third chapter. All of these things have been given so that we, and all that God has called, can have this personal relationship with God and when Christ returns be resurrected from the dead. If that’s hard to grasp, which it is, think of the speck of what you were when you were

conceived compared to what you are now at whatever age and stage in life that you are. From that little speck, you came. So likewise, consider your life now in the flesh the same as that little speck compared to what it's going to be at the resurrection.

So here's what God wants us to do. Colossians 3:12: "Put on then, as *the elect* of God... [Think of that—*the elect!* That can mean the *select*. Because you answered the call, *God has selected you.*] ...Holy and beloved, deep inner affections, kindness, humility, meekness *and* longsuffering.... [All of this has to do then with our relationship with one another and other people.] ...forbearing one another, and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so also you *should forgive*. And above all these things *put on* love, which is *the bond of perfection*" (vs 12-14). That bond of perfection is the continuous ongoing relationship that we have with God the Father and Jesus Christ daily.

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which you were called into one body, and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And *in everything—whatever you do in word or in deed—...*" (vs 15-17)—the complete conversion of life.

This is why we are to be thankful. So this makes the day of Thanksgiving that we observe here in America so much greater for us in the Church. We have all the physical things. Then you add all the spiritual things. I guess we should put the spiritual things underneath, because they are the ones, which then produce the most for us.

"...do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (v 17).

Even though this will reach you after Thanksgiving Day, *for us everyday should be a day of thanksgiving*, but we can thank God for the blessing that He gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that we can live in this land that has received the fullest blessing of everything physical, and so help us now to respond to Him in everything spiritual.

- 3) Psalm 31:19-24
- 4) Psalm 69:24-36
- 5) Psalm 107:17-22
- 6) 2-Thessalonians 1:1-3
- 7) 1-Timothy 1:11-16
- 8) Colossians 2:6-10
- 9) Colossians 4:2
- 10) Philippians 4:6-8
- 11) Colossians 3:12-17

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Psalm 95
- James 5
- Ephesians 3
- 1-Thessalonians 5

Also referenced:

Sermons:

- *From a Speck of Dust to a Son of God, Why Were You Born?*
- *Twelve Steps of Sin*

Sermon Series:

- *Obsessed With Sex*, (churchathome.com)
- *Why God Hates Religion*

Book: *Lord, What Shall I Do?* (coming soon)

Video: *Israel of the Alps* (produced by the Seventh Day Adventist Church)

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Scriptural References:

- 1) Deuteronomy 8:1-14, 16-20
- 2) Matthew 11:25-29