

Series: Ephesians
Title: Rather Giving of Thanks
Text: Eph 5: 4, 19, 20
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In Ephesians 4, Christ our Head, through the apostle Paul, reminded us of the things that Christ has done for us who are chosen of God and redeemed by Christ's blood. Christ sent us the gospel in truth, created us anew through the Holy Spirit, brought us to rest all in Christ our Righteousness. Christ "fitly joined us" with each other in his body, the church. As Christ effectually works grace in each of us, he compacts us together more, making us see our need of each other, by using each of us to provide the gospel for each other. Through the gospel, Christ will grow us and add to his body such as should be called out—those he has redeemed. The furtherance of the gospel of Christ is our purpose as Christ's church. So Paul said, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind..." (Eph 4: 17)

Then Christ used Paul to teach us how we are to walk and conduct ourselves. Brethren, Christ's purpose in teaching us these things is: not to attain a righteousness of our own—Christ is our Righteousness; this is not to bring ourselves into a state of holiness—Christ is our Sanctifier and our Sanctification; this is not to draw attention to ourselves or exalt ourselves; this is not to be used as rules to convict and arrest each other and bite and devour each other.

The purpose of these exhortations are so that as we set forth the gospel the word of God be not blasphemed (Ti 2: 5); so that we "cannot be condemned" by men; "that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." (Titus 2: 8); "that we may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." (Titus 2: 10); that we might be credible witnesses, as we set forth the gospel to lost sinners, to friends and family; so that instead of their eyes and ears being on us, instead of them being offended by us, they might be attentive to the gospel of Christ. If they be offended let it be the offense of the cross, not because we are disobeying the word of our Master. The purpose is that in all things Christ might have the preeminence.

Ephesians 5: 1: Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2: And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. 3: But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; [now, here is our text] 4: Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

Again, we have instruction involving our tongue. So much emphasis is put on how we use our tongue. Why? That which is predominate in our speech reveals our hearts. Christ said, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

For example, he said, "Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things which is the Head, even Christ." (Eph 4: 15) The believer who really speaks the truth, in love, by the grace and power of God working in him, does so because God has created a heart of truth, which is in love with Christ and with his brethren. He said, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor." (Eph 4: 25) If we speak lies, we are liars at heart—the LORD said in Isaiah 8:20, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." If we speak the truth of God, God has made us true in our hearts. Then he said, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." (Eph 4: 29) If a man's speech is corrupt, it comes from a corrupt heart. Our Lord said, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things." (Mt 12: 35) Then he said, "Let all...evil speaking, be put away from you,

with all malice.” (Eph 4: 31) Christ said, “an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” (Mt 12: 35)

Now again in our text, “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.” (Eph 5: 4) Which heart do we have? Is it a filthy, foolish, jesting-sarcastic heart? Or do we have a heart abounding in thanksgiving to God?

Here is the point of this message. That which is becoming the character of a child of God is to use our hearts and our tongues to give thanks to God rather than obscene, idle, hurtful talk.

MEANING OF THE WORDS

First, let’s understand the meaning of these words.

“Filthiness” involves all obscene and indecent language. Someone said we verbally do the things we speak. We live in Sodom, USA—the TV is obscene, the music is obscene, the talk around us is obscene. It is easy to understand what Lot felt, “vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.” (2 Pet 2: 7)

“Foolish talking” is language that is useless, idle, senseless and unprofitable. The word of the gospel has nothing foolish or idle in it. Every word is profitable, not one word is useless filler. Christ is the Word made flesh. The whole time he walked this earth, do we find any word in scripture which he spoke which was vain chit-chat? Not a word. When you hear someone constantly chattering meaningless words—you ignore them. Can we even imagine our Savior speaking like that? But the person whose words are few, who speaks only when they have something wise, true and valuable to say, you hang on every word. “The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.” (Pro 15: 2) When the kids were just beginning to talk, Melinda used to tell them, “Use your words.” Our Savior is teaching his children to learn to use your words.

“Jesting” is being witty or humorous or sarcastic at the expense of others, to embarrass or to make them look weak or put them in a bad light. It may or may not be malicious. But if it runs the risk of being hurtful or taken the wrong way, it is better unsaid. It almost always includes conceit and self-exaltation. It is meant to make the speaker look wiser than the other fellow.

“Which are not convenient”, it means it is unbecoming the character of saints and it is disagreeable to the will of God. Our text is the will of our Redeemer so, as followers of God, as dear children, we want to obey him.

Believers are happy. We have great reason to be full of joy. Scripture does not teach us to be sullen and silent all the time. The Lord teaches us to be courteous, to be pleasant (which includes casual pleasantries). There is nothing wrong with good-natured humor. It is the obscene, useless, hurtful speech, we are to avoid.

BETTER USE OF THE TONGUE

Here is a far better use of the tongue—this is a great use of the tongue. He says, “But rather giving of thanks...Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eph 5: 5, 19, 20) We saw one great use of our tongue “speaking the truth in love”, “that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” This is another great use of the tongue—giving of thanks to God.

Brethren, if each time we were about to speak some useless word, simply to make noise or to fill up space in conversation, imagine if instead we thought of one of the innumerable things we have to thank God for, and in our hearts, we quietly thanked him instead of speaking. We would never run out of things to thank him for. And if we spoke to others about the things we are thankful for it is a good way to bear witness of our God and Savior.

First, we thank God for his unspeakable gift—his beloved Son—God our Father has made us fit for heaven, right now, in his Son Christ Jesus, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” (Col 1: 12) What is it to be made “meet”—fit. It means everything requires of us, God has accomplished for us in his Son so that there remains nothing else for us to do to enter into God’s presence. We have been delivered and translated, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son.” (Col 1: 13) We have redemption and forgiveness, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins.” (Col 1: 14) “Therefore as ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” (Col 2: 6-7) God the Father has given us the privilege of being sons, and Christ has put us in his body for the purpose of setting forth the good news that eternal life is the gift of God and this life is in his Son. So he says, “whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Col 3: 17) So first of all, above all, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” (2 Cor 9: 15)

Secondly, we thank God for his lovingkindness and faithfulness toward his elect. Psalm 92 is «A Psalm or Song for the sabbath day.» Christ is our Rest in whom all of these things are ours from our God.

Psalm 92: 1:..It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: 2: To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,...4: For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands. 5: O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. 6: A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.

But thanks be unto God, you know and you understand. “Blessed art thou, [believer] for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” (Mt 16: 17) Thank God for his lovingkindness in Christ Jesus and for his faithfulness toward us for Christ’s sake. Thank God he has made us glad through his work, not our own! So we will triumph by the works of his hands! Oh, believer, thank God for his works and for his thoughts toward us. God said, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” (Jer 29: 11)

Psalm 92: 7: When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever: 8: But thou, LORD, art most high for evermore. 9: For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. 10: But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil.

Brethren, we were workers of iniquity, BUT God, loved us and chose us in Christ by his grace! Christ shall be exalted and he is our Strength! Therefore, our horn—our strength—God shall exalt as the strength of the unicorn—rhinoceros. He shall anoint us with fresh oil—the Holy Spirit and Christ our Strength

Psalm 92: 12: The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13: Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. 14: They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; 15: To shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

Christ promised we shall not be ashamed. God chose us, Christ redeemed us, the Spirit regenerated us and called us. He planted us and he promises we shall flourish and grow and he shall do it. Even in old age, even when we close our eyes to this life—as God promised us—“they shall be fat and flourishing; To shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.”

Thirdly, we thank God for preserving us. He said, “Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. 1 Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.” (Ps 97: 10-12)

Fourthly, we thank him because he is good and merciful, “O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.” (1 Chr 16: 34) God is good. He has never done anything toward his child except that which is good. For those he loves in Christ, “His mercy endures forever.” Aren’t we thankful! We need mercy forever. And his mercy endures forever.

Fifthly, brethren, we can thank God for one another. What a gift! Paul said, of himself, I “cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.” (Eph 1: 16) Speaking to the Thessalonians, Paul said by the Holy Spirit, “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” (2 Thess 2: 13) He said in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, “what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God.” (1 Thess 3: 9) “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Ps 133: 1)

Sixthly, as we, together, support the preaching of the gospel we have great reason to thank God, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Cor 2: 14-16) We can thank God that his word never returns unto him void. It always accomplishes that which he pleases.

Seventhly, we give thanks for all men whom God has placed in authority to rule over us.

1 Tim 2: 1: I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2: For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3: For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

Eight, we thank God that our Savior has all power and reigns over all, “And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.” (Rev 11: 16-17)

Lastly, we thank God because he shall give us the victory over death, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56: The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor 15: 55-57)

THANK GOD ALWAYS FOR ALL THINGS

Let us close with this. Paul said, “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eph 5: 20) Brethren, “All things” takes in everything—what do we have that we did not receive of God? We have not begun to exhaust this subject: all temporal things, food and raiment, all the

mercies of life, even sadness and heartache. We thank God in every circumstance of life whether it be adversity or whether be comfortable

There is so much better use of our tongue than obscene, useless, and hurtful talk. Our Master says, "Speak the truth of Christ in love." And when we are not doing that "thank God always."

Psalm 69:30: I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. 31: This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

Hebrews 13:15: By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

Amen!