

## Thanks...for What?

Is there anything to be thankful for? How would you respond if someone asked, “What are you thankful for?”

All of us are affected in some way at almost any time by difficulties and sadness. It may be due to unemployment, serious illness or the death of a loved one. For many of us it's the sting of retirement funds tanking or losing thousands in a house sale. Maybe you're distraught over a relative serving in a war zone. And even if you're not directly feeling anything like that today, certainly hardship touches the lives of many people you know.

Life is hard. No wonder thankfulness doesn't come naturally! Yet thankfulness is an important part of life. God even included not being thankful as a characteristic of those who had no respect for him! They knew about God, but the Bible says “*they did not honor him as God or give thanks*” (Romans 1:21).

### Why is being thankful so hard?

We routinely take significant things for granted, too. For instance, the Bible says, “*The God who made the world and everything in it... gives to all mankind life and breath and everything*” (Acts 17:24-25). He supplies the air we breathe and gives us the ability to breathe it. How long has it been since you thanked God for the ingenious life-support system you live by!

And that points back to a bigger problem. The very first generation of mankind rebelled against God and passed on that rebellion to every following generation: “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). Sin taints everything we do and condemns us to eternity outside God's presence.

Having mankind crushed under the condemnation of our sin was never what God wanted for us. Yet for God's justice to be met, the penalty of our sins must be fully paid. Our situation would be hopeless if Jesus Christ hadn't stepped in to pay the penalty for us. God's perfect Son became a human to do just that: "*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8)! God accepted Christ's death in payment for our sin-debt. And because of Christ's resurrection three days later, those who believe in him can be assured of life with God in heaven after death. Jesus promised them, "*Because I live, you also will live*" (John 14:19).

The way to God is clear. Jesus said, "*I am the way...No one comes to the Father except through me*" (John 14:6). "*Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name*" (Acts 10:43). The only offer available from God is an absolutely free gift: "*it is the gift of God, not a result of works*" (Ephesians 2:8-9). It's made possible only by accepting Christ as the one who died in our place.

### **Now that's something to be thankful for!**

Imagine such an amazing gift being rejected and going unthanked! If you don't accept God's offer, if you don't appreciate his love, then what will you say to him on judgment day? "*It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment*" (Hebrews 9:27). How do you expect God to respond to you if you never accepted his amazing offer of salvation, made possible by the greatest sacrifice ever?

Now is the time to accept what God has done to secure your forgiveness and eternal future. If that's your heart's desire, you can tell him by praying words like these...*"Dear God, I'm sorry for living my own way and ignoring your gracious offer of forgiveness. I now believe that Jesus died to pay the debt of my sins. I don't deserve it, but thank you for forgiving me and giving me eternal life. Thank you for making it possible for me to start a relationship with you that will last forever. And thank you for your love for me. Amen."*

The God "*who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all*"

(Romans 8:32) wants to help you face all of your difficulties—beginning the moment you place your trust in him for salvation. In a world with so much hardship and pain, that’s definitely something to be thankful for!



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