

## **THANK GOD THAT HE HAS NOTHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR.**

Thanksgiving, 2018

**Romans 11:33-36.** Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Dear Christian Friends:

In November, 2011 Washington Post columnist, Carolyn Butler, wrote about thankfulness. She wrote, “Thanking people is good manners... but it may also lead to better, healthier lives. ‘We know that grateful kids are happier [and] more satisfied with their lives...’ [Grateful children] report better relationships with friends and family, higher GPAs, less materialism, less envy and less depression, along with a desire to connect to their community and to want to give back.’ ...[T]here’s an even larger field of research on adults showing that being thankful has numerous psychological, social and even physical benefits such as lower blood pressure.”

So, it is good for you to say, “Thank you.” If someone holds a door for you, you say “Thank you.” If someone gives you a gift, you say, “Thank you.” If someone compliments you on work well done, you say, “Thank you.” Even after the police officer gives you a speeding ticket, you should still thank the officer for their professionalism and courtesy.

Saying “thank you,” and being thankful are such important virtues, we train our children to be polite. We feel offended if someone does not thank us for being nice to them. So, being thankful and saying, “thank you,” are basic requirements to being a polite, respectful, valuable member of society. We should all be thankful because every single one of us has many things to be thankful for. We have many people to thank.

That is, everybody should be thankful except for one person. God does not have to be thankful. He does not have anything to be thankful for. He does not have to say, “thank you,” to anyone. Now, at first, that might sound shocking. It might make you think, “It sounds insulting to God. After all, isn’t thankfulness a virtue? And isn’t God the most virtuous being in existence? So, how can you say that **GOD HAS NOTHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR?**”

Well, I can say that because Saint Paul says that. He says, **Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.**

Paul lists several reasons why God has no one to thank and why God has nothing to be thankful for. First, Paul says, **Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!** God is so rich in wisdom and knowledge there is no end to his intelligence. God knows everything.

But you and I don’t know everything. That’s why students should thank their teachers for explaining a lesson. You should thank your parents for teaching you proper manners and basic social skills. You should thank your coworker for teaching you how to operate a machine or properly file a report.

So, we have to thank other people for teaching us skills and facts we don’t know. But, again, God knows everything. Saint Paul restates that when he says, **“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?”** The answer to Paul’s rhetorical questions is “nobody.” Since nobody knows more than God and since nobody can give God advice that he doesn’t already know, God has no reason to thank anybody for their advice.

Paul continues. **“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?”** Again, the answer to Paul’s question is the same. Nobody has ever given anything to God that God didn’t give to that person in the first place. That’s because God made everything in the universe. Nothing exists that God did not make. And even if God needed or wanted something (*which he*

*doesn't*)—even if God wanted something, he would not have to ask anyone for it. God would just create that thing out of nothing.

In contrast, you and I need people to give us things. We need our employer to give us a job. Or we need customers to give us their business. We need the government to give us law and order, peace and protection from our enemies. We need doctors, nurses, physician's assistants, pharmacists, and therapists to give us good health. So, there is no such thing as an independent person. We all depend on other people to give us the things we need to live. When they give us those things, we need to thank them.

So, to be thankful means that someone did you a favor or someone gave you something you couldn't come up with on your own. But that never describes God. God doesn't depend on anyone. That's why God doesn't have to be thankful. He does not need anyone to give him anything. It's just the opposite. God is the giver of everything. Saint James tells us, **Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.**

God does not change. He always is who he is. God is always complete in the nature of his existence. This also makes him eternal, without beginning and without end, totally free from the limits of time. That also makes God infinite. Nothing can limit his power, his knowledge, or the extension of his being. Saint Paul sums all this up at the end of our text. **For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.**

But what does all this mean for you and me as we celebrate Thanksgiving? Well, it's obvious, isn't it? Since God created everything and since God gives all the good things we have, God deserves our thanks and praise. ***It is good and right that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to God, our Father, almighty and everlasting God.***

But thanking and praising God includes more than just telling everyone how great God is. It certainly includes that. But true thanksgiving, real worship, and authentic praise contain one necessary and important element. ***Trust.*** We see an excellent example of trust in Job. After the Lord allowed

him to lose his wealth, his health, and his children, Job still praised God. Our first lesson told us, **[Job] fell to the ground in worship and said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.” In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.**

Job realized that even though God could give him everything, God owed him nothing. That’s humility. That is also trust. Humility and trust lead to thankfulness and praise. That’s what thanksgiving means to you and me. In humility we recognize that God owes us nothing. But we trust God to give us everything we truly need. We trust God because there is no end to his wisdom. We trust God because there is no limit to his power. We also trust God because there is no way to measure his goodness and love.

We know that God’s love is immeasurable because of the cross of Christ. God did not have to send Jesus. But he did. God did not have to give us saving faith in Jesus. But he did. By that gift of faith God empowers us to say to him, “Lord, I praise and thank you. I am an unworthy sinner. I do not deserve anything good from you. Far too often I take your generosity for granted. Far too often I demand blessings when you don’t owe me a thing. Far too often I fail to worship and praise you. Far too often I fail to recognize how totally dependent I am on your power, on your wisdom, and on your love. But Lord, as meager and as flawed as my praise is, I do thank you. I worship you. I adore you and glorify you because you have given me all good things. You have also given me your best. You gave me your Son, Jesus Christ. He poured out his blood on the cross to rescue me from all my sins—even my sins of ingratitude and half-hearted thanksgiving.”

Such a faith in Jesus leads you to be thankful to God for everything. Faith in Christ leads you to be content. And faith in Christ leads you to **THANK GOD THAT HE HAS NOTHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR.** AMEN.