

Priority Thanksgiving Prayers Most Christians Have Never Prayed

Editor's Note: This is Part 1 of a two-part series.

What is the greatest gift you've ever received? Is there one blessing above all others that has ignited your heart with undying gratitude? Is there any work of God's grace toward you that fills your daily prayers with appreciation and praise?

Christians know from Scripture, there's only one answer to all three questions: our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul tells us so in 2 Corinthians 9:15. Here it is in four translations (with emphasis added):

- Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! (RSV)
- Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (NIV)
- Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words! (NLT)
- Thank God for this gift, his gift. No language can praise it enough! (MSG)

In the context, Paul is speaking of Jesus and all the blessings that come to us through him. For example, the apostle reflects in the previous chapter:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Jesus is the greatest gift any of us will ever receive. All other gifts—in fact, all the promises of God—are showered on us through him.

Yet we're told in verse 15, he's the one gift that is inexpressible, indescribable, beyond human description—unspeakable.

So, how can any Thanksgiving Day prayer be shaped by something—by someone—so lofty, so profound, so amazing that current vocabulary fails to do him justice?

Moreover, Paul increases the difficulty of our challenge in Ephesians 3:8 when he adds that in God's Son are found "riches" that are "inexhaustible" (MSG), "boundless" (NIV) and "endless" (NLT).

So, even if I'm able to come up with words to express gratitude for how we have "received grace upon grace out of Christ's fullness" (John 1), there will never be an end to my discoveries of all the treasures found in my Savior!

No wonder the Bible declares that our Father "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3b, MEV). "Heavenly" means we have topics for prayers of thanksgiving defined by eternal, cosmic, angelic realities beyond this world—and defined by who Jesus is, where he sits, and what his current saving reign means for me.

Still, as impossible as it may seem, Christians are called to take hold of words and declare with their tongues heartfelt thanks to God the best we know how. We are to "rejoice always" and "in everything give thanks" (1 Thess. 5:16, 18, NKJV)—most of all, as we give thanks for Jesus, the one gift that subsumes all others—including in 2018.

Let Me Help You Create a New Way to Pray at Your Thanksgiving Table This Year

What I want to do for the remainder of this blog post is give you seven facets of this one grand gift, suggesting a few key questions for you to answer about each.

Then, your answers can be used to compose seven one-paragraph prayers—basically by turning each separate answer for each main topic into an expression of thanksgiving to the Father for the Son, based on what your answers inspire for you.

Finally, I suggest that you type up your seven single thanksgiving paragraphs on seven separate sheets of paper. At your Thanksgiving Day celebration distribute each written prayer to seven guests. Before the meal begins, ask each person to read the prayer out loud, asking everyone else to pray along silently.

Encourage everyone to see each prayer as a new kind of Thanksgiving prayer that most of them have never prayed before. Also, remind them that all seven prayers are really one prayer—all about the one Person who is the greatest blessing any of us could possibly celebrate in the past year.

NOTE: The seven topics for these seven prayers are based on the seven groundbreaking keys explored in over 600 pages in my latest book, *Christ Is Now!*—in case you would like to explore any of this in more depth for yourself.

1. Thanks for the gift of who Christ is to us

Prompts to help you shape your prayer:

- What is one insight Jesus helped you to see more clearly about the nature and ways of God this past year?
- What is one new truth about Jesus' majesty and supremacy you discovered in your study of the Bible this past year?
- What is one name or title for Jesus (out of over 300 in Scripture) that brought special joy and meaning at some point in your life this past year?
- In 2018, what was one time your identity as one who belongs to God's Son blessed you?

Compose Thanksgiving Prayer No. 1. Drawing on your four answers, create a one-paragraph prayer thanking the Father for the gift of who Christ is to us.

2. Thanks for the gift of who Christ is *for* us

Prompts to help you shape your prayer:

- What blesses you about knowing Jesus can fully understand you in whatever you're going through because for our sakes, He became one of us?
- At what one specific moment in 2018 did Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for your sins take on a deeper meaning for you, filling you with gratitude for all He suffered for you?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus conquered death forever? This past year how has this truth brought you comfort or filled you with renewed hope?
- Are you thankful for a moment this past year when the truth about Jesus victorious reign today increased your confidence to face a challenge?

Compose Thanksgiving Prayer #2. Drawing on your four answers, create a one-paragraph prayer thanking the Father for the gift of who Christ is *for* us.

3. Thanks for the gift of who Christ is *over* us

Prompts to help you shape your prayer:

- Was there one time this past year when the truth that Jesus reigns over the workings of creation filled you with praise?
- Was there a time this past year when the truth that Jesus overrules in the unfolding of world history gave you new reasons to celebrate?
- Was there a time this past year when the truth that Jesus is in full control of the design of global leaders brought you a measure of reassurance and hope?

- Was there a time this past year when the truth that Jesus is advancing his kingdom among earth's people fill you with renewed excitement about what lies ahead for the gospel?
- Was there a time this past year when you witnessed Jesus reigning over the forces of darkness in a way that removed fear from you and ignited bold faith in you?

Compose Thanksgiving Prayer No. 3. Drawing on your five answers, create a one-paragraph prayer thanking the Father for the gift of who Christ is *over* us.

4. Thanks for the gift of who Christ is *before* us

Prompts to help you shape your prayer:

- Christ has gone before us into the future to bring it back to us right now. What is one way you've seen him do that for you this past year?
- Jesus has gone before us into the heavens to take us there with him right now. What is one way this reality has encouraged you this past year?
- Christ has gone before us into the promises of God to make them ours too, right now. Is there one promise of Scripture you've had fulfilled in your life this past year through Christ?
- Jesus has gone before us into the world to open up a way for us to serve him right now. What is one way this past year our Savior opened a new way to share him with someone else?

Compose Thanksgiving Prayer No. 4. Drawing on your four answers, create a one-paragraph prayer thanking the Father for the gift of who Christ is **BEFORE** us. {eo}