

The New Testament Church
The Doctrine of Thanksgiving

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November 22, 2020 – Thanksgiving Sunday

I Grace and Gratitude – two iconic images depicting the doctrine of Thanksgiving

- A. “Grace” – a 1918 photograph by Eric Enstrom in his studio in Minnesota
 - 1. It was taken of Charles Wilden, a peddler who sold foot-scrappers
 - 2. *I wanted to take a picture that would show people that even though they had to do without many things because of the war they still had much to be thankful for.*
 - 3. Enstrom’s daughter, Mrs. Rhoda Nyberg, painted the original photo in oils
 - 4. It is one of the most reproduced pictures of the 20th century
- B. “Gratitude” – 1960’s photograph by Jack Garren, a Chr. Bookstore owner in Illinois
 - 1. It was taken of Mrs. Myrtle Copple, designed to complement “Grace”
 - 2. The two are now often packaged together – “Grace and Gratitude”

II The Doctrine of Thanksgiving (or gratitude)

- A. Gratitude is a result of the work of Sanctification or spiritual maturity
 - 1. Only perfect people get to heaven – that rules out all of us
 - 2. God is perfect holiness and cannot dwell with evil or sin in any form
 - 3. Due to the fact of sin (and not just our sins), we deserve eternal punishment
 - 4. Since we are saved by grace, *the doctrine of gratitude is thanking God for His mercy and kindness in extending his Salvation to us* (Ephesians 2:7)
 - 5. As we grow, we no longer demand anything from God, only His presence!
- B. What is gratitude?
 - 1. It is a position – *we are grateful for God’s mercy*
 - 2. It is a feeling (experience – *we feel grateful when we see what we could be*)
 - 3. Titus 3:4-7 is important to highlight here – *But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we have done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*
 - 4. The “last days” include ingratitude
 - a. Romans 1:21 – *neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him*
 - b. 2nd Timothy 3:2 – *lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy.*
 - 5. Ingratitude is *forgetting* what God has done
 - a. Deuteronomy 8:19-20 – *If you ever forget the Lord your God and follow other gods, and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed. Like the nations the Lord destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the Lord your God.*

- b. Psalm 104 – *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.*
- 6. We show gratitude by *a holy life, cultivating gratitude (the depth of which is an indication of our sanctification or maturity), worship, tithing, loyalty to fellowship, Bible studies, helping others (visitation, giving food, comfort, etc.)*

II Gratitude among the Pilgrims – 400th anniversary of their arrival on Cape Cod

- A. Consider this – *they faced persecution and death, were paraded through the streets, mocked, sworn at, and put in jail, the women and children had to go back to their neighborhoods and ask for mercy for a place to stay, then the men were separated from the women and children who were arrested as they departed by boat, then they nearly shipwrecked in a massive storm before finally making it to Amsterdam.*
- B. They hadn't even left yet for the new world – *though their church grew to over 300, they were constantly on guard, being hunted by the English authorities, and then faced learning a new language, new trades and constant poverty. When they did decide to come to the new world – they sold all they had, purchased a ship, and headed to Southampton, only to find out that their contract had been changed! They now had to work six days a week just to pay off their debts (which it took 22 years to complete with investors charging over 30% interest). Then the only ship they owned sprung a leak, and they had to sell it for a loss – with 10-12 of them having to return. Now they were crammed into only one ship – and after they landed, it was winter, and the women had to stay another two months on board the ship! Then, half their number died the first winter! But what was their response?*
- C. They always say the silver lining in hard times – *for by these so public troubles in so many eminent places their cause became famous and occasioned many to look into the same, and their godly carriage and Christian behavior was such as left a eep impression in the minds of many.*
- D. *...the difficulties were many, but not invincible... it might be sundry of the things feared might never befall; others by provident care and the use of good eans might in a great measure be prevented, and all of them, through the help of God, by fortitude and patience, might either be borne or overcome.*
- E. *And thus, like Gideon's army, this small number was divided, as if the Lord by this work of His providence thought these few too many for the great work He had to do.*
- F. *What could now sustain them but the Spirit of God and His grace? May not and ought not the children of these fathers rightly say; 'our fathers were Englishmen which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in this wilderness, but they cried unto the Lord, and He heard their voice and looked on their adversity, let them therefore praise the Lord, because He is good, and His mercies endure forever*
- G. The first winter, peace, reconciliation, thanksgiving, and economic productivity...
- H. Conclusion – in light of this doctrine, this truth... I exhort you
 - a. To give your brothers and sisters space – treat them with respect and love
 - b. Focus on the silver lining – what we have, rather than what we don't have
 - c. Let us move in love, forgiveness, and edification...