***I’m Glad You Exist***

**Thanksgiving 2020, #3: Philippians 1:3-11 November 22, 2020**

***I thank my God every time I remember you.
In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy
because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now . . . .*Philippians 1:3-5**

**The history of Paul and the Philippians**

*11 From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis. 12 From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.*

*13 On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. 14 One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God . . . .*

*16 Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future . . . .*

*25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them . . . . 29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*

Acts 16

 1) Paul’s story begins with listening to a variety of ways the Spirit leads (Acts 16:6-10)

 2) Paul is thankful for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Thanks because . . . thanks being confident that . . . .**

*I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 1:3-6

 1) Thankful because we “share” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 2) Thankful because Jesus \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 3) This time the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is added!

**How to be glad for each other**

1) Recognize (and make it public!) that we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

1 Corinthians 12:21-27

 1) Not being thankful, ultimately hurts \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 2) Being thankful honors the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2) Focus on the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (it’s hard not to give thanks!)

*2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow [or Syzygus, a name], help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

*4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 4

 1) The gospel should be valuable enough to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 2) Rejoicing, gentleness and thanksgiving are on the path to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3) Imagine how God is at work

*In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 1:4-6

 1) Begin now because I will eventually \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 2) Even the unconverted will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Resources for further studies of Thanksgiving**

Two wonderful Spurgeon sermons Philippians 1 are at the monergism.com site: [*https://www.monergism.com/topics/sermon-manuscripts-mp3s-scripture/philippians/chapter-philippians/chapter-01*](https://www.monergism.com/topics/sermon-manuscripts-mp3s-scripture/philippians/chapter-philippians/chapter-01)

Bob Deffinbaugh has three sermons on this introduction to Philippians at [*https://bible.org/series/live-christ-study-book-philippians*](https://bible.org/series/live-christ-study-book-philippians)

Gordon Fee has a wonderful discussion of thanksgiving in his Philippians commentary available at:
[*https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/Phil/Prayer-Thanksgiving*](https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/Phil/Prayer-Thanksgiving)

Randy Alcorn has a great little article on enjoying God’s good gifts at [*https://www.epm.org/blog/2020/Nov/9/time-efforts-hobbies*](https://www.epm.org/blog/2020/Nov/9/time-efforts-hobbies)

Nicholas Batzig’s blog on giving thanks like Jesus at [*https://feedingonchrist.org/thankfulness-jesus/?utm\_source=rss&utm\_medium=rss&utm\_campaign=thankfulness-jesus*](https://feedingonchrist.org/thankfulness-jesus/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=thankfulness-jesus)

Kevin de Young has a series of Thanksgiving blogs, including these:
[*https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/stuffed-full-with-thankfulness/*](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/stuffed-full-with-thankfulness/)
[*https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/gratitude-to-gods-glory/*](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/gratitude-to-gods-glory/)

# The Angelus by Jean-Francois Millet, 1857-1859

# The Angelus by Jean-Francois Millet, 1857-1859also called “Prayer for the Potato Crop”

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|  |  |  |  | Paul |  | and |  | Timothy |  | slaves |  | of Christ |  | Jesus |  | to all |  | the |  | holy ones |  | in |  |
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| Christ |  | Jesus |  | the ones |  | being |  | in |  | Philippi |  | with |  | overseers |  | and |  | servants |
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|   |  |  |  |  | favor |  | to you |  | and |  | peace |  | from |  | God |  | Father |  | of us |  | and |  | Master |  | Jesus |  |
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|  |  |  | I give good favor |  | to the |  | God |  | of me |  | on |  | all |  | the |  | memory |  | of you |  |  |  |  | always |  |
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| in |  | all |  | request |  | of me |  | on behalf |  | of all |  | of you |   |  | with |  | joy |  | the |  | request |  |
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| making |   |  |  |  |  | on |  | the |  | partnership |  | of you |  | in |  | the |  | good message |  | from |  | the |  |
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| first |  | day |  | until |  | the |  | now |   |  |  |  |  | being persuaded |  | same |  | this |   |  | that |  |
| JFSGX  |  | NFSG  |  | MG  |  | ANSG  |  | JNSGX  | SN |  |  |  |  | VRAPMSN  |  | OAINSA  |  | ODENSA  | SN |  | CSN  |  |

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| the one |  | having begun |  | in |  | you |  | work |  | good |  | will complete thoroughly |  | until |  |
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| day |  | of Christ |  | Jesus |   |  |  |  |  |  | Just as |  | it is |  | right |  | to me |  | this |  | to think |  |
| NFSG  |  | NMSG  |  | NMSG  | SJ |  |  |  |  |  | CSP  |  | V3SPAI  |  | JNSNX  |  | OP1 SD  |  | ODENSA  |  | VPAN  |  |

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| on behalf |  | of all |  | of you |  | because |  | the |  | to have |  | me |  | in |  | the |  | heart |  | you |   |
| PG  |  | JMPGX  |  | OP2 PG  |  | PA  |  | ANSA  |  | VPAN  |  | OP1 SA  |  | PD  |  | AFSD  |  | NFSD  |  | OP2 PA  | SN |

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|  | in |  | both |  | the |  | chains |  | of me |  | and |  | in |  | the |  | defense |  | and |  | confirmation |  | of the |  |
|  | PD  |  | CCC  |  | AMPD  |  | NMPD  |  | OP1 SG  |  | CCC  |  | PD  |  | AFSD  |  | NFSD  |  | CCK  |  | NFSD  |  | ANSG  |  |

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| good message |  | co-partners |  | of me |  | of the |  | favor |  | all |  | you |  | being |   |  |  |  |  |  |
| NNSG  |  | NMPA  |  | OP1 SG  |  | AFSG  |  | NFSG  |  | JMPAX  |  | OP2 PA  |  | VPAPMPA  | SJ |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Testifier |  | for |  | of me |  | the |  | God |  | as |  | I desire longingly |  | all |  | you |  | in |  |
| NMSN  |  | CCX  |  | OP1 SG  |  | AMSN  |  | NMSN  |  | CSN  |  | V1SPAI  |  | JMPAX  |  | OP2 PA  |  | PD  |  |

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| affections |  | of Christ |  | Jesus |   |  |  |  |  |  | And |  | this |  | I pray |   |  | that |  | the |  |
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| love |  | of you |  | still |  | more |  | and |  | more |  | might exceed |  | in |  | perception |  | and |  | all |  |
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[[1]](#footnote-1)

# A Thanksgiving Jesus

[Nicholas T. Batzig](https://feedingonchrist.org/author/nbatzig/)

If you were hoping to read something about our Puritan-American heritage–based on the title of this post–you will be sorely disappointed. If you’re looking for fodder for the culture war that is raging against the Christian foundation of this country in some aspect of [the Plymouth plantation narrative](http://books.google.com/books?id=tYecOAN1cwwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=on+plymouth+plantation&hl=en&sa=X&ei=CQ12VO7xIYukNqClg4gK&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false), you won’t find it here. If you, however, you are wanting to know what the Scriptures teach us about thanksgiving from the life and ministry of Jesus, then you’ve come to the right place. One of the things that we can be certain of–concerning all of the sinless perfections of incarnate Son of God–is that Jesus expressed full and unceasing gratitude to His Father for every provision, every kindness, every protection, every soul-strengthening support and every miraculous act that the Father worked through Him during His earthly ministry. Without doubt, Jesus is the most thankful person that ever walked the face of the earth; and yet, while we may safely be assured of this, there are only a few instances in which the Scriptures tell us about the thankfulness of Jesus. This should strike us as strange, given all that the Scriptures teach us about our own need to be thankful. Thankfulness–and the sinful lack of it–is one of the foremost teachings of Scripture. Though there are so many other passages, consider the teaching of Psalm 107, Luke 17:11-19 and 2 Timothy 3:2 in this regard. So, what are we to make of the fact that there are actually very few instances in which we are told of the thankfulness of Jesus? And, what can we then learn from the Scriptural record of the instances of His thankfulness?

In his sermon “[The First and Last Supper](http://mp3.sa-media.com/filearea/72712125023/72712125023.mp3),” Sinclair Ferguson points out that Jesus’ emotional life was not always evident to us because He did not “let His emotions all hang out.” He explained:

If you read through the Gospels you will learn a great deal from the Gospel testimony to the character and attractiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Occasionally, you will see His inner emotional life coming to expression. Occasionally, in a deep sense of truly righteous anger. On occasion, in the tears that flow from His eyes. And very rarely in the way our modest Lord Jesus Christ did not let His emotions all hang out.

While there is a reservedness on the part of Jesus in revealing all of His emotions, the Gospel writers have recorded several instances in which Jesus verbalized thanksgiving to His Father. They can be found in Matt. 11:25; 15:36; 26:27; Mark 8:8; 14:23; Luke 10:21; 22:17, 19; John 6:11, 23; 11:41 and I Corinthians 11:24. What is remarkable about these instances of thanksgiving is that they can all be placed into one of three categories; and, each of these three categories are bound up in or related to the work of redemption. In short, Jesus’ thankfulness teaches us to pour out our own hearts in thanksgiving to God–above all, for the redemption that He has freely given to us in the Son. Jesus’ prayers of thanksgiving fall into one of the following three categories:

**1) Thankfulness for the miracles that served the purposes of redemption.**

The Apostle John leaves us the record of Jesus offering thanks to God prior to performing two of His most noteworthy miracle–the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:11), and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:41-42). With regard to the first, we might be tempted to conclude that Jesus merely gave thanks for the meal that He and His disciples, together with the multitude, were about to eat. However, the fact that it is the last thing we read before He performed the miracle, and the only other instance of Jesus giving thanks in John’s Gospel is immediately prior to raising Lazarus from the dead, shows that it is gratitude–not for the common provision of food–but for the miraculous sign pointing to His glory as the only Redeemer of men. In other words, Jesus gave thanks for the Father working the miracle through Him so that men would believe in Him. This becomes all the more clear as He exposits the true purpose of the feeding of the multitude–claiming that He was “the bread which came down from heaven to give life to the world.” The same is true with his giving thanks prior to raising Lazarus–a miracle that accompanied his declaration that He Himself is “the resurrection and the life.”

**2) Thankfulness for God’s sovereignty in the redemption of men.**

The next thing for which Jesus offered thanksgiving is recorded in Matthew 11:25 and Luke 10:21. Just before calling men to come to Him and find rest for their souls, Jesus thanked His Father for “hiding these things (i.e. the things of the Gospel) from the wise and prudent and revealing them to babes.” Jesus was thankful for God’s sovereign work in the redemption of men–in His sovereign regeneration and illumination of their minds and hearts in revealing Christ to them. Jesus was thankful that the Father hid the truth of the Gospel from men and women who thought that they were wise and who rejected His claims. Jesus thanked His Father for election and reprobation.

**3) Thankfulness for the fulfillment of redemption in His sufferings.**

Finally, Jesus thanked His father for His own sufferings. This might strike you as strange to hear, since we read of Jesus’ soul sufferings in the Garden of Gethsemane, hear His cry, “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me” and listen in astonishment as He writhed in anguish, crying, “My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?” However, on the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread and wine and–taking up each of these symbols of the sufferings that He was about to endure–He “gave thanks.” Jesus thanked His Father that His body would be broken and His blood would be shed. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus, “for the joy set before Him, endured the cross.” Jesus knew that His sufferings were substitutionary and that they would bring many sons to glory. Jesus drank the bitter cup that was placed prospectively before Him in the Garden because, as John Maclaurin so astutely observed, “he had a still greater aversion to (His people having to drink it), than to drinking of it Himself.” Jesus thanked His Father for the hell that He would endure on the cross because He knew that it would result in the redemption of those that the Father had given to Him.

In short, the three things for which Jesus expressed thanksgiving were all bound up in the work of redemption. In this, Jesus teaches us that above all the things that we should be thankful for–not just on one day in November, but every day of our lives–is the redemption that we have in His blood, the forgiveness of our sins. The Apostle Paul and Peter surely understand this. When Paul opened his letter to the church in Ephesus he started with a declaration of thanksgiving to God for the redemption that we have in Christ: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ…” When the Apostle Peter opened his first epistle he led with the same proclamation of praise and thanksgiving: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead…” May God give us grace to learn from our Lord Jesus and the example of the Apostles that for which we ought to continually express gratitude to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Prayer as ThanksgivingGordon Fee’s commentary on Philippians at https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/Phil/Prayer-Thanksgiving

In every truly Christian life the most obvious evidence of the experience of God's grace and peace is gratitude and joy (cf. 4:4, 6). Thus in his earliest letter, to a church that was experiencing severe trial, Paul concluded by exhorting, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this [all three of these] is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess 5:16-18). Our letter is the clear evidence, some twelve years or so later, that Paul was as good as his preaching.

It had long been Paul's habit to begin his letters with a thanksgiving and prayer report. This is not to be understood as thanksgiving and prayer in general, however, but it anticipates matters taken up in the body of the letter. Here one often finds expressed both the immediate urgencies and the theological basis for much in the letter. Philippians is no exception.

Three matters make up most of our letter: (1) genuine gratitude for the Philippians' partnership with him in the gospel over many years, evidenced most recently by a material gift brought by Epaphroditus; (2) news about his present imprisonment and what he expects to come of it; and (c) an appeal for steadfastness and unity in light of some relational breakdowns, present opposition and the danger of false teaching.

These concerns predominate in Paul's thanksgiving and prayer. First, he is genuinely grateful for them; indeed *every time* he thinks about them in prayer, he both thanks God for them--and for their lifelong *partnership* with him *in the gospel*--and prays for them with great *joy, confident* that God will bring his own *good work* in them to full fruition (vv. 3-6). Second, Paul's present joy and confidence stem from his deep sense of personal relationship with them, evidenced both by their partnership with him in the gospel and his profound *affection* for them (vv. 7-8). They *share in God's grace with* him even in his present *chains.*

Finally, he reports the content of his prayer, whose concern is primarily for an increase in their *love* for one another, and thus that they be *filled with the fruit of righteousness* now and *blameless* at the coming of Christ (vv. 9-11). Thus through prayer and thanksgiving he anticipates the various concerns of the letter--their partnership with him in the gospel, his deep concern for them, and the need for love to replace internal bickering.Thanksgiving--to God for His People (1:3-4) At this point in letters between friends, the writer usually inquires about her friend's present well-being, as in "I trust everything is finally going better for you, and that you have gotten over the bug that has been plaguing you." Ancient letters of friendship also began in this fashion, very often in a similar, somewhat standardized form, usually as a prayer-wish to the gods (e.g., "before anything else I pray that you are well"). Like the greeting, in Paul's hands these kinds of conventions become transformed by the gospel.

Paul's various thanksgivings reveal some generally consistent patterns. First, they are always directed toward God on behalf of the people who are receiving the letter. Paul is first of all grateful for them, for the special gift of brothers and sisters whom God has brought into his life, not for "blessings" or material goods. Second, the thanksgiving occurs whenever his thoughts are focused on them in prayer *(every time I remember you).* Third, for Paul prayer and thanksgiving blend; his thanksgiving for them always takes place in the context of his regular habit of praying for them *(in all my prayers . . . always).*

What is different in our letter is the mention of making his prayer and thanksgiving *with joy.* Whatever else, the Philippians were for Paul a cause of great joy. The word order ("with joy the prayer making") gives this phrase special emphasis; indeed this is the first of sixteen occurrences of this word group *(joy)* in the letter. While this is not as dominant a motif as many suggest, it is a recurring motif and can scarcely be missed. The very awkwardness of the phrase in this case forces it upon the Philippians'--and our--attention.

Joy lies at the heart of the Christian experience of the gospel; it is the fruit of the Spirit in any truly Christian life, serving as primary evidence of the Spirit's presence (Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22). Precisely because this is so, joy transcends present circumstances; it is based altogether on the Spirit, God's way of being present with his people under the new covenant. Hence joy prevails for Paul even in prison; he will urge that it prevail for the Philippians as well in their present suffering in the face of opposition.

Here, then, is the paradigm of Pauline spirituality: thanksgiving and prayer, filled with joy, on behalf of *all* of God's people in Philippi. See further on 4:4-7.Basis for Thanksgiving--The Past (1:5) Paul's thanksgiving is not finished. Verses 3-4 focused on the Philippian believers themselves and Paul's joy in remembering them in prayer. He now indicates the basis of his joy, which serves as further reason for his thanksgiving: their *partnership (koinonia)* in the furtherance of *the gospel.*

The precise nuance of koinonia in this clause, however, is not easy to pin down. Usually translated into English as "fellowship," the word primarily refers to participating in something rather than sharing something in common with others. Its basic sense here, then, is "participation in the spread of the gospel," which in light of verse 7 very likely carries the further connotation of doing so in "partnership with Paul."

It does not take much reading of Paul's letters to recognize that *the gospel* is the singular passion of his life; that passion is the glue that holds this letter together. *The gospel,* especially in Philippians, for Paul refers primarily neither to a body of teaching nor to proclamation. Above all, the gospel has to do with Christ, both his person and his work. To preach Christ (vv. 15-16) is to preach the gospel, which is all about Christ; to preach the gospel is to proclaim God's good news of salvation that he has effected in Christ. Thus Paul's joy in prayer is prompted by their *partnership in [the furtherance of] the gospel.*

The present focus is on the Philippians' longtime association with Paul in the gospel, *from the first day until now.* According to the rest of the letter this took place in two ways: first by their sharing with him of their material means as he is imprisoned for the sake of the gospel (4:15-16); second by their proclaiming, and living in keeping with, the gospel in Philippi, where they are urged to "contend as one [person] for the faith of the gospel" (1:27) as they there "hold out the word of life" (2:16).Basis for Thanksgiving--The Future (1:6) Paul is still not done with his thanksgiving. His mention of their participation in the gospel *from the first day until now* leads him to add, in a somewhat digressive way, that he is fully *confident* that what was true *from the first day* and is still true *now* will be true at the end as well. But this confidence has very little to do with them and everything to do with God, who both *began a good work,* which is still in evidence, and will *carry it on to completion until the day of Christ.* Thus, having reminded them of his joy over their good past and present, Paul turns now to assure them of their certain future.

The *good work* that God has begun and will bring to full fruition may very well include their grace of giving, or perhaps their continued participation in the gospel in every way. More likely, however, it refers to God's *good work* of salvation itself, of creating a people for his name in Philippi. If so, the sentence anticipates 2:12-13, where Paul urges them to keep working out their common salvation in the way they live together as God's people in Philippi, since God is at work in them both to will and to do for the sake of his own good pleasure. Thus the concern is for their participation in the gospel in yet another sense, not so much their sharing it as their experiencing it and living it out in Philippi.

*The day of Christ,* on which God will bring his *work* in them *to completion,* points to the final consummation of salvation at Christ's (now second) coming. The reason for this otherwise digressive clause is probably related to another concern that surfaces at several points in the letter: that some of them have apparently begun to lose the basic future orientation that marks all truly Christian life. In 3:15-17 they are urged to follow Paul's example of desiring to know Christ above all (3:6-11) and eagerly to pursue the prize of knowing him fully at the end (vv. 12-14). Here Paul anticipates that exhortation by focusing on God's own commitment to bring them to *completion* on *the day of Christ.*

Believers in Christ are people of the future, a sure future that has already begun in the present. They are citizens of heaven (3:20) who live the life of heaven, the life of the future, in the present in whatever circumstances they find themselves. To lose this future orientation, and especially to lose the sense of "straining toward what is ahead, . . . toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called [us] heavenward" (3:13-14), is to lose too much. Thus their present gift, which also reminds Paul of their long association in the gospel, leads him to digress momentarily, to remind them that even in the midst of present difficulties, God has in Christ guaranteed their future as well as blessed their present situation in Philippi.Basis for Confidence and Thanksgiving (1:7-8) Paul is still not finished with his thanksgiving, at least not with the (now convoluted) sentence that began as a thanksgiving. With the comparative conjunction "just as" (omitted from the NIV), he proceeds to offer justification for his confidence in verse 6 and to elaborate on his grounds for thanksgiving in verses 4-5.

This is the conclusion of Surgeon’s “Perseverance of the Saints” message on Philippians 1:6 at
[*http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols13-15/chs872.pdf*](http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols13-15/chs872.pdf)

Lastly, *this doctrine has a voice to the unconverted*. I know it had to me. If anything in this world first

led me to desire to be a Christian, it was the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. I had seen

companions of my boyhood, somewhat more advanced than myself, who were held up to me as patterns of

all that was excellent. I had seen them apprenticed in large towns, or launching out in business for

themselves, and soon their moral excellences was swept away. Instead of being patterns, they came to be

persons against whom the young were warned for their supremacy in vice.

This thought occurred to me—“That may also be my character in years to come. Is there any way by

which a holy character can be ensured for the future? Is there any way by which a young man by taking heed

may be kept from uncleanness and iniquity?” And I found that if I put my trust in Christ, I had the promise

that I should hold on my way, and grow stronger and stronger. And though I feared I might never be a true

believer, and so get the promise fulfilled to myself, for I was so unworthy, yet the music of it always

charmed me. “Oh, if I could but come to Christ and hide myself like a dove in His wounds, then I should be

safe. If I could but have Him to wash me from my past sins, then His Spirit would keep me from future sin,

and I should be preserved to the end.”

Does not this attract you? Oh, I hope there may be some who will be allured by such a salvation as this.

We preach no rickety Gospel which will not bear your weight. It is no chariot whose axles will snap, or

whose wheels will be taken off. This is no foundation of sand that may sink in the day of the flood. Here is

the everlasting God pledging Himself by covenant and oath and He will write His law in your heart, that you

shall not depart from Him. He will keep you, that you shall not wander into sin, and if for a while you stray,

He will restore you again to the paths of righteousness.

O young men and maidens, turn in hither! Cast in your lot with Christ and His people. Trust Him, trust

Him, trust Him, and then shall this precious truth be yours, and the experience of it be illustrated in your life—

Kevin de Young’s blog at [*https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/gratitude-to-gods-glory/*](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/gratitude-to-gods-glory/)

For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. ([*2 Corinthians 4:15*](https://www.esv.org/2%20Corinthians%204%3A15/))

The Heidelberg Catechism is famous for its threefold outline of Christian theology: guilt, grace, and gratitude. We are guilty sinners before God. God saves us from guilt by his grace. We respond to this grace with heartfelt gratitude. You could add a fourth strand-glory. When we respond to grace with gratitude, God gets glory.

[Psalm 50:23](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%2050%3A23/) says, “The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me.”  We often think of thanksgiving as a family holiday, or something we give perfunctorily before meals, or something our mother commanded of us when we were in a rotten mood. But being thankful goes deeper, or, I should say, it goes higher. Gratitude makes much of God because it shows (1) that God is the author of all that is good and (2) that we love the Giver more than the gifts.

Paul explained that he ministered for the sake of the Corinthians so that more people might receive grace, so that more people might be thankful, so that more glory might go to God. What marvelous, gospel-proclaiming, God-glorifying logic! When we minister faithfully, God gets glory every step of the way.

Randy Alcorn on whether we can enjoy hobbies with Thanskgiving
at [*https://www.epm.org/blog/2020/Nov/9/time-efforts-hobbies*](https://www.epm.org/blog/2020/Nov/9/time-efforts-hobbies)

But seen properly, even hobbies and leisure activities can draw our hearts to worship Christ and be part of what’s done for Christ’s glory. A wartime mentality can be taken to such an extreme that we feel it’s unfaithful to enjoy any possessions, pleasures, or special activities. That’s why I’m so thankful that in the midst of his command that the rich be generous, in 1 Timothy Paul reminds us that God provides everything for our enjoyment! Even in wartime, it’s important to have battle breaks. Soldiers need rest and recreation. Life isn’t just utilitarian. There’s nothing wrong with spending time on pleasures that renew and revive us, especially considering that our battle will last a lifetime.

I’m grateful to have fun possessions, such as a bicycle, tennis racket, and mask, snorkel, and fins. They aren’t necessary; yet they contribute to my physical and mental health. Our family spends money on vacations that aren’t “necessary,” yet they bring renewal and precious relationship-building opportunities. My wife and I sometimes go out to dinner, enriching our relationship and renewing our vigor to return to life’s battles. We can give away much or most of our income and seek to use our time wisely, yet still have breathing room for legitimate recreational spending and leisure time.

Paul says it is demons and liars who portray the physical realm as unspiritual, forbid people from the joys of marriage, including sex, and “order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” ([1 Timothy 4:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim%204.3-5)). God is a lavish giver. “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” ([Romans 8:32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.32)).

Because of the current darkness of our hearts, we must be careful not to make idols out of created things. But God isn’t displeased when we enjoy a good meal, marital sex, a football game, a cozy fire, or a good book. He’s not up in Heaven frowning at us and saying, “Stop it—you should only find joy in me.” This would be as foreign to God’s nature as our heavenly Father as it would be to mine as an earthly father if I gave my daughters a Christmas gift and started pouting because they enjoyed it too much. No, I gave the gift to bring joy to them and to me—if they didn’t take pleasure in it, I’d be disappointed. Their pleasure in my gift to them draws them closer to me. I am delighted that they enjoy the gift.

Of course, if children become so preoccupied with the gift that they walk away from their father and ignore him, that’s different. Though preoccupation with a God-given gift can turn into idolatry, enjoying that same gift with a grateful heart can draw us closer to God.

God welcomes prayers of thanksgiving for meals, games, books, relationships, and every other good thing. When we fail to acknowledge God as the source of all good things, we fail to give Him the recognition and glory He deserves. We separate joy from God, which is like trying to separate heat from fire or wetness from rain.

Every day we should see God in the food we eat, the air we breathe, the friendships we enjoy, and the pleasures of family, work, and hobbies. Yes, we must sometimes forgo secondary pleasures, and we should never let them eclipse God. And we should avoid opulence and waste when others are needy. But we should thank God for all of life’s joys, large and small, and allow them to draw us to Him. My taking pleasure in a good meal or a good book is taking pleasure in God. It’s not a substitute for God, nor is it a distraction from Him. In the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, it’s what I was made for: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

Now I can return to this specific question about reward: when we use hobbies and leisure activities as an opportunity to worship and glorify and thank God, we are acting in faith. Faith is what pleases Him, and our seeking Him is what He will reward ([Hebrews 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb%2011.6)). So yes, I believe hobbies done to God’s glory could be something He might well reward. Either way, when done to honor Him, they certainly won’t be considered worthless in our gracious Father’s eyes!

God is the one who gives us our gifts, abilities, and resources, all of which we are to steward well, seeking to please our Master. The first person Scripture describes as “filled with the Spirit” wasn’t a prophet or priest; he was an Israelite craftsman ([Exodus 31:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod%2031.1-6)). God gifted and called Bezalel to be a skilled laborer, a master craftsman, a God-glorifying artist. The gifting and calling were from God ([Exodus 35:30-35](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod%2035.30-35)). He created each of us as individuals, with different interests and skills and talents, and using them to His glory is part of being a good steward. Different activities may even be a means of connecting with people we might otherwise never meet and provide opportunities to share about the God we love and serve!

Of course, if we participate in activities that don’t honor our Lord, or have pride in our abilities, or use them as excuse to neglect the other things God has commanded and called us to do, then yes, hobbies can become sin, and something God wouldn’t reward us for at His judgment seat.

If what you otherwise would have done with an hour spent on a leisure activity is pray, read the Bible, feed the poor, gather with your church, or share Jesus with your neighbor, then sure, just say “no” to the hobby!  But if you would have spent it doing a number of other discretionary things, then feel free to say “yes” to it. Do it wisely, do it God’s glory, and do it with joy and thanksgiving, knowing “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above” ([James 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James%201.17)).

# From the December, 2020, edition of *First Thingshttps://www.firstthings.com/article/2020/12/briefly-noted*

[*The Love That Is God: An Invitation to Christian Faith*](https://www.amazon.com/Love-That-God-Invitation-Christian/dp/0802877958?tag=firstthings20-20)by Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt

Bauerschmidt has the heart of an evangelist. The Love That Is God reads like a manifesto for those jaded by the Christian faith, in which Bauerschmidt insists that the God of the Christian tradition may not be who its cultured despisers think he is. Love, claims Bauerschmidt, is the very essence of the triune God. Once we recognize this love in the Cross, it changes our lives: Jesus becomes our friend, we extend the love of friendship to one another, and we live out this friendship in the community of the church.

While in no way sentimental, The Love That Is God does, at times, fail to accentuate the particularities of the Christian faith. Has punishment no place at all in our understanding of redemption? Is there a positive role for the use of force? While it’s (rather obviously) true that old and young, black and white, conservative and liberal, gay and straight are all called into friendship with Christ, doesn’t Bauerschmidt’s sermon at the end of the book engage in some serious category obfuscation at this point? And what could he possibly mean with the suggestion that baptism washes away the boundaries of ethnicity, social status, and gender?

All the same, lucid rays of light make the reader sit up and take note. The portrayal of Jesus’s life as “the manifestation in history of the eternal joy that is Father, Son, and Spirit” is wonderfully reminiscent of Herbert McCabe’s Christology. Jesus’s friendship is not earned but a gift of grace, Bauerschmidt rightly insists. To the traditional difficulty of how God can be our friend, Bauerschmidt appeals to Catherine of Siena: In loving others, we love God himself. And among the book’s many aphorisms, this one surely stands out: “If . . . what it means for us to love someone or something is to say ‘I am glad you exist,’ then what it means for God to love us is for God to say, ‘Because I am glad, you exist.’”

—Hans Boersma

# Prayer of Thanksgiving with the Ten Commandments

By Christ Schoon. Published in Reformed Worship at
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Throughout church history and across denominations, God’s people have given a privileged place within worship to the reading of the Ten Commandments. In my experience, the Ten Commandments have usually been included as a Call to Confession or as a Call to Holy Living. In the first instance, our attention is drawn toward how we have fallen short of God’s expectations. Our sin is exposed. In the second, we are called to live more faithfully in response to God’s grace in Jesus Christ. While these are good and right uses of the Law, I have been wondering if the Ten Commandments could also facilitate a prayer of thanksgiving within our communal worship. The responsive reading below has grown out of this wondering and is designed to encourage thanksgiving and praise for who God is and what God is doing among us.

### ****A Prayer of Thanksgiving:****

**Leader**:
“And God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, who brought you out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:1-3)

**People**:
**We praise you, Creator, Redeemer, Comforter! Holy Three-in-One, there is no one like you!**

**Leader:**
“You shall not make for yourself an image of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.” (Exodus 20:4)

**People:**
**O Lord, our God, with thanksgiving, we delight in the very good purposes for which you have created all things, including us. We are humbled to be signposts of your glory.**

**Leader:**
“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.” (Exodus 20:7)

**People:**
**Heavenly Father, thank you for adopting us as your children, giving us your family name. Thank you for uniting us as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.**

**Leader:**
“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.” (Exodus 20:8-10a)

**People:**
**How incredibly generous of you! Both in your work of creating and restoring all things and in your rest, you desire that we would be with you.**

**Leader:**
“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” (Exodus 20:12)

**People:**
**God, how gracious you are that you do not leave us on our own! Thank you for the privilege of seeing your faithfulness extend from generation to generation.**

**Leader:**
“You shall not murder.” (Exodus 20:13)

**People:**
**Thank you for the gift of life and for creating each person as an expression of your love and faithfulness to the rest of your creation.**

**Leader:**
“You shall not commit adultery.” (Exodus 20:14)

**People:**
**Thank you for the beauty and security of marriage, for the delight of sex, the intimacy of life-long companionship, and your faithful love that we experience through them.**

**Leader:**
“You shall not steal.” (Exodus 20:15)

**People:**
**Thank you that you are our Provider and for creating us in a community where we can delight in extending your resources to each other.**

**Leader:**
“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.” (Exodus 20:16)

**People:**
**Thank you that you do not show favoritism. In Jesus Christ, you extend your hospitality, even to us who have been foreigners and enemies of your kingdom.**

**Leader:**
“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

**People:**
**God, thank you for the freedom to celebrate your care for others and for us. You are more generous than we have yet to imagine.**

**Leader:**
All this we pray, for the glory of the one true God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – the full unity of God’s people, and the flourishing of God’s kingdom.

**All:
Amen.**

1. Nestle, E., Nestle, E., Aland, B., Aland, K., Karavidopoulos, J., Martini, C. M., & Metzger, B. M. (1993). [*The Greek New Testament*](https://ref.ly/logosres/na27int?ref=BibleNA27.Php&off=0&ctx=+%0a~%CE%A0%CE%A1%CE%9F%CE%A3+%CE%A6%CE%99%CE%9B%CE%99%CE%A0%CE%A0%CE%97%CE%A3%CE%99%CE%9F%CE%A5) (27th ed., Php). Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: Stuttgart. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)