

DON'T FORGET THE GRAVY!
1 Chronicles 29:1-22

Well Thanksgiving is this week and I want to take advantage of the holiday to preach on thanksgiving because it is a major element in every believer's life and when the holiday was instituted most officially by Abraham Lincoln in 1863, it was done with a biblical worldview and principle. I don't know if you've ever read the transcript from the initial proclamation, but it's quite the proclamation especially when you consider the setting that it was written in. It was written during the Civil War, a bloody and depressing time in our country, and Lincoln wanted to everyone to pause for a moment and reflect on all the blessings they had received from God that year despite the situation they were in. Here's the introduction of it: *"The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature that they cannot fail to penetrate and even soften the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God."* You need to read that a few times. Lincoln knew Who to give thanks too and the necessity of doing it.

That's something a lot of folks are missing today. Instead of actually giving thanks to God, they ignore God and Thanksgiving is basically treated as just a time to be thankful. You can be thankful for a lot of things (friends/family/pets/running water/hot water/food/naps) but never really give thanks to God for them. In fact, I just watched a popular animated film with my daughter and in the movie everyone was gathering around a thanksgiving style meal talking about how thankful they were for certain things, but nobody gave any credit to God. Romans 1:21 says that's one of the marks of the depravity of man – "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give Him thanks." They've replaced *thanks-giving* (the giving of thanks to God) with "*thankfulness*". If you don't actually *give* God thanks, it's not *thanks-giving* is it? Thanksgiving requires action, at the least through prayer. To be **thankful without giving thanks to God is to leave the thankfulness unfinished**. Thankfulness without actually giving thanks is like preparing a whole **thanksgiving dinner** with turkey, potatoes, stuffing, green bean casserole, pumpkin pie, BUT **forgetting the gravy!** You can't have thanksgiving dinner **without gravy!** It's unfinished! My grandma did that one year – and only once! She never forgot that year. It was a historic moment that came was brought up every year after that. Being thankful without actually giving thanks to God is to go without gravy! Thankfulness is just a step to the finished product of thanksgiving. For the majority, Lincoln's original intention behind the holiday has been lost. As believers, when we say that we're thankful, it's not just a positive vibe or feeling or thought. We aren't just thankful. We are thankful more specifically – **we are thankful to God. More importantly, we are thankful for God!** For all that He is *and* does for us.

The main passage we're going to be in today in 1 Chronicles 29 isn't necessarily a passage on thanksgiving, but you see the giving of thanks throughout it. The main reason why I landed on this passage specifically for this topic is because I think **it directs our hearts** from just being thankful for certain things, to ultimately and more-importantly being thankful for the source from whom we have been given these things – Almighty God! It teaches us to be more thankful for Him than for anything we could ever have in this life. That's where we're going to be today but first let's pick up some context in 1 Chronicles 17. We're pickup up the story on the life King David, who lived about 1,000 years B.C.

I. THE CONTEXT OF OUR THANKS-GIVING PASSAGE.

1 Chronicles 17:1 says, "And it came about, when David dwelt in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, "Behold, I am dwelling in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the

Lord is under curtains. Then Nathan said to David, ‘Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you.’” Israel’s King David, whom we know fairly well, was a godly man. In fact, the Bible describes him as a man after God’s own heart. He loved the Lord with all his heart and we are hard pressed to find anyone more determined and delighted to give praise and thanks God than David. It was David who wrote many of the psalms and had instruments made for worshipping God and David who initially desired to build a temple for God. After David brought the ark of God to Jerusalem, he became concerned about how he lived in a fine house of cedar and yet **the ark of God**, representing God’s earthly presence, lived in a tent! David wanted to build a temple for God. He wanted more for God than just the portable **tabernacle**, the tent-like structure God designed for Moses and the wilderness Israelites to carry around. He wanted a permanent place for God’s name and shekinah glory to reside in the land – a **temple!**

However, apparently Nathan spoke too soon for God because in verse 3 it says, “It came about the same night that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, “Go and tell David My servant, ‘Thus says the Lord, “You shall not build a house for Me to dwell in; for I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up Israel to this day, but I have gone from tent to tent and from one dwelling place to another. In all the places where I have walked with all Israel, have I spoken a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people, saying, ‘Why have you not built for Me a house of cedar?’” So what was the problem? Well, **the Lord simply hadn’t commanded it** and it was a big deal to make a decision like that. We find out elsewhere too, that God told David he had simply shed too much blood in his days. David was a man of war, fighting for Israel, and apparently in God’s eyes he had just shed too much blood (22:8; 28:3). Nathan should have inquired more of the Lord here. They should’ve prayed more and waited for God to respond. Just because the desire was noble and the motives were pure, *doesn’t mean it was God’s desire at least at the time*. I don’t know if that’s ever happened to you... you had a great plans and pure motives and you wanted to do great things for God – you wanted to step out and do something big but God said no. Your friends said “do all that is in your heart!” but you ended up a little ahead of God somewhere and began to sense the discipline of the Lord. You know what you need to do in those situations when God says no?

❖ **Just be thankful for God’s “No”!**

Accept it. Give thanks to God for the “no” because you know God is going to use His “no” more than He’ll use your great idea or your friend’s misguided counsel. **If you disregard the counsel of God and follow through on your own plans, you’ll miss the blessing that is to be found in God’s no** and you’ll end up in frustration instead – a lesson learned the hard way. The whole reason for the grand occasion that we will get to in chapter 29, dedicating the Temple and anointing Solomon as king, is because God previously said no! God’s no brings blessing. When God says no and you listen and obey, you know you’re where you’re supposed to be, even if it isn’t where you necessarily want to be. Be thankful for the “no” because God will use His “no”.

Even though God said no to David building the temple, **He didn’t reject the idea altogether**. For one, God let David prepare to build the temple. He let David round up materials for building the temple and David did it. That’s what I love about David here. He didn’t throw a fit when God said no, nor did he let it drag him down. Even if he couldn’t build it himself, he was just excited to be a part of it! God also lets David know that instead of David building a house for Him, He was going to build a “house” for David! The “no” resulted in the Davidic Covenant! Look at verse 10, “Moreover, I tell you that the Lord will build a house for you. When your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up one of your descendants after you, who will

be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever.” So the first “house” God was referring to was David’s posterity, referring to his son Solomon who would build God’s house, the temple. It’s also speaking prophetically of Christ who would come later through David’s lineage and rule on an everlasting throne. But God says it is Solomon who will build the temple. And so this is where we find ourselves in chapter 29: David is old and his death is now immanent so he has gathered prince Solomon and the leaders of Israel and many people for this purpose of officially anointing Solomon as king and to commit to their unified charge, the building of this temple.

So let’s read the first 5 verses of our passage. He’s speaking to all the leaders of the land (28:1).

II. **ASPECTS OF A THANKS-GIVING TO GOD HEART (VV. 1-9)**

Again, I love David’s attitude toward all of this. If David was in it for himself and only wanted to build a temple for his own name (to say he built this for God), he never would’ve responded like he does. He doesn’t care if it’s him who builds the temple or his son! **He’s just thankful that he can have a part in it!** He says, “I’ve provided all I could in my ability. I delight in the house of my God. I give Him all this treasure. It’s all for Him.” This guy is a worshipper. He is so thankful for God – not the treasure, but God – that He is willing to give all of this to God to see Him glorified. This is one the aspect of a heart that’s truly thankful to God.

A. **A thanks-giving to God actually gives back to God.**

You see, when we come to thanksgiving time, a lot of the emphasis is on the things we have. I’m thankful for this and that – and that’s good – but a really thankful heart expresses it. It expresses thanks to God by giving back to Him what He has blessed you with. It’s a thank-offering. When we put money in the plate here at church, it’s giving back, saying thanks. David leads by example in his giving of thanks by giving of resources and later through a prayer of praise and adoration. Notice how David’s thanks-giving heart rubs off onto others contagiously. We see that in the next few verses (6-9).

B. **A thanks-giving to God heart is contagious!**

Other leaders give thousands of talents, gold, silver, brass, iron, precious stones. Just tons of materials are donated **willingly** and **joyfully**. The joy was contagious. The people, it says in verse 9, “rejoiced greatly because they had offered so willingly, for they made their offering to the Lord with a whole heart, and King David also rejoiced greatly.” Isn’t this great?! Most of the time the world us that, “*If you want to be happy, you need to look after you. Look after number one. Build your empire.*” But that sort of mentality is just never going to bring the joy and fulfillment that these Israelites are experiencing right now in giving back to God. They gave over and above what was expected or required. They’re more thankful to know God and have God than they are to have the treasures of this world. This is one of those moments in Israel’s history where we need to look up to them. I hope that’s what folks think of us as well – that we’re more thankful to God for God than for anything we could ever obtain in this life.

But if you ever want to get to this point where you find great joy in giving (and God loves the cheerful giver), you’ll need to understand a key component in these Israelites’ belief system. See if you can figure out what that key component is in verses 10-19.

III. **THE KEY COMPONENT OF THANKS-GIVING: THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.** (VV. 10-19)

Much like a car won't run without certain key components, like the ignition key, **great thankfulness won't be produced without the key component of God's sovereignty, understanding He's the source of all the gracious bounties we enjoy.** By sovereignty, we mean He's the Creator and Owner and Ruler and Giver and Provider of everything. He owns it all. He alone dwells in supreme authority and power. Everything you and I have – even the breath we breathe and the strength we have to work and make a living – is from Him. That's what these Israelites understand. They probably worked for a lot of what they're giving, maybe even fought some battles and plundered their enemies for it but they still understood it's all from the Lord.

Without that understanding it's hard to be truly thankful or to give thanks because you're tempted to think that you've earned everything you have by your own power or your own strength. But once you understand that it's His common graces to you allowing you to live and do what you do, it changes you. It makes you a cheerful giver because you realize that everything is a gift from God. If you live with the idea that what you have is all because you earned it in your own strength, you'll be tempted to hang on to everything with a closed fist (It's mine, I earned it!). But when you realize it's a gift from a sovereign God, that's when you realize you can open your hand and give. Giving hurts when you're in this life by yourself, but when you've got a sovereign God, you can open up your hand and give cheerfully. I know this experientially but it's difficult to put into words.

A. A proper perspective of God. (vv. 10-14)

Just listen to David's theology! – Yours, O Lord, is the **greatness** and **power** and **glory** and the **victory** and the **majesty**, indeed You have **dominion** over everything on earth and in heaven. You're **head** over all. **Riches, honor, rule, power, might, strength** – it's **all** from You! Verse 13 CLIMAX: “Now **therefore, we thank you** and praise Your glorious name[!]” These Israelites and David were giving a lot of material goods to God, but they were thanking God that were able to do so! They thanked God that they could give to God! Isn't that something?! You need *this* view of sovereignty to help you give with the right motives. They realized that God *didn't need* their money or materials. They acknowledged everything belonged to God and even what they gave Him was already His.

I want to show you a fascinating text that reveals what happens when you lose this proper perspective of God's sovereignty. Turn with me to Psalm 50:7-14. In Psalm 50, Israel had forgotten that God didn't need their offerings so when they offered sacrifices, they actually did it ***without a thankful heart!*** They thought they were doing God some great favor by their offerings and God should thank them! Verse 7 (NIV): “Listen, my people, and I will speak; I will testify against you, Israel: I am God, your God. I bring no charges against you concerning your sacrifices or concerning your burnt offerings, which are ever before me.” Basically, they haven't quit sacrificing or sacrificing generously, BUT, there's something wrong with their motives in their offering of sacrifices. They need to recognize His sovereignty, which is why he starts out with , “Listen. I am God. Your God. I am not dependent on you.” Verse 8, the reproof: “I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills, I know every bird in the mountains, and the insects in the fields are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?” Do you sense some sarcasm in that? They thought God was dependent upon their offerings. God didn't institute offerings because He needed them. It wasn't like God actually ate the offerings. You could say the sacrificial system was designed for man to worship, not man for the offerings and the offerings for God. They

lost a proper perspective on God and because of it, their sense of thankfulness. So He says, “**Sacrifice thank offerings to God [NASB says, sacrifice offerings of thanksgiving to God], fulfill your vows to the Most High and call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor Me.**” Their **removing sovereignty removed thankfulness and trust. Understanding sovereignty then would produce thankfulness and trust.** God wanted them to acknowledge His sovereignty and so be **thankful** for Him and **trustful** of Him! The Israelites of Psalm 50 needed to understand what the Israelites of 1 Chronicles 29 understood: That “all things come from You, and from Your hand we have [simply] given [back to] You.”

B. The proper perspective of man (vv. 15-19)

In verses 15-19 the emphasis in David’s prayer shifts from God’s sovereignty to man’s dependence upon God. The unlimited and all-powerful Kingly majesty being contrasted now with finite man, who is limited in his existence, limited in power, a steward in subjection to the King.

- We’re sojourners before You = temporary dwellers with no rights.
- We’re tenants like our father = temporary stewards enjoying that which we’ve been given charge over which belongs to the King.
- Our days on earth are as shadows = here one second, gone the next. Constantly changing and shifting with every course of the sun (unlike God who never changes and has no shadow).
- There is no hope = referring to the fact that there’s no one who doesn’t go the way of the earth. We all return to the dust and there’s nothing any of us can do in our own power to stop our returning to dust. There’s no hope of not dying, generally speaking (I think this is why the rapture is considered our blessed hope in Titus – no death, no tribulation).

The humility in this prayer of David is just amazing. In fact, J. Vernon McGee said it’s the greatest prayer in the Old Testament. You see it in what it typically referred to as the Lord’s prayer: “Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.” We need more prayer like this to **direct our hearts back to God (v. 18)**. The moment we take our focus off the sovereignty of God like this is when we start to fall into discouragement and despair. If you’re down today, redirect your heart to sovereignty. Thank Him. Trust Him. He’s what you need. Some of you are going sit down to the holiday meals this year and there’s going to be an empty seat or two around the table for whatever reason – family couldn’t make it and some have gone to be with the Lord. Direct you heart back to the Lord. Rejoice and give thanks for His constant goodnesses to you, especially His goodness to you in Christ. Be thankful this life is short and you will soon see your loved one. We have hope in Christ. Give thanks. Do what Israel did: Bow low and give homage to the Lord. Verses 20-22.

IV. THANKS-GIVING TO GOD IS WORSHIP! (VV. 20-22)

This is what we want to do this thanksgiving. We want to bless God and bow low and give Him thanks because He is worthy of it. Society these days seems like it wants to bypass thanksgiving and move right on to Christmas. But we need this holiday before Christmas to remind us to be thankful to God, and thankful for God – more thankful for Him than anything we could receive as a Christmas present. This Thanksgiving gives thanks to the Lord and eat and drink before Him with gladness. But don’t just make it a one-day thing. Notice in verse 21, they woke up the next day and brought more offerings: 3,000. For Christians, thanksgiving isn’t just something we do one day out of the year. It’s our lifestyle.

Be thankful every day but remember to give thanks to God! Don’t forget the gravy!