

*Thanks from a Grateful Heart*

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*All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.*

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## INTRODUCTION

A great release comes to the Christian who is thankful. Even in the midst of difficulties, his heart overflows with the joy of the Lord. And though Satan's attacks are specifically designed to bring discouragement, the act of giving thanks brings protection for our souls and minds.

We have been released from the captivity of sin, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, and His Resurrection power is now at work in us. His mercy is our dwelling place. We are His people and He is our God (Jeremiah 30:18-22). These are the themes that should ring out from within, and when we allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in our hearts, the Word we have received will enable us to overcome negativity and stress.

This booklet is written not only to instruct us in the doctrine of thanksgiving, but also to express my great thanks to the Lord and to those who have touched my heart.

## Chapter One

# FROM THE HEART

“And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small” (Jeremiah 30:19).

“Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, *doing the will of God from the heart*” (Ephesians 6:6).

“But God be thanked, that ye *were* the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye *became* the servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:17-18). Here, the Word of God is referring to a person who no longer serves sin. None of us is sinless, yet because of our recognition of the work that Christ finished on Calvary, we are blameless.\* And in Jeremiah 30:19, God will glorify those who have thanksgiving that proceeds from the heart.

When God honors the thankful Christian, men don't like it. They call it "adulation"—an inordinate show of praise. Of course, Hollywood gives out its Oscars, TV stars get Emmys, and athletes are worshipped by adoring fans. But at times when God glorifies His people, some Christians still react. They don't understand how to rejoice when one is honored or how to weep when someone suffers. Simply put, many are not taking up their membership in the Body of Christ as a particular portion (1 Corinthians 12:26-27).

God glorifies men and He says "they shall not be small." What a wonderful declaration! They will not be "little" before Him in anything that they do because thanksgiving proceeds from their hearts. Their hearts are not divided by envy, bitterness, or insecurity. When there is any negativity, they deal with it instantly and go on.

### *The Sound of Thanksgiving*

We are to give thanks in everything, for this is the will of God. In 2 Chronicles 5:13, trumpeters and singers were appointed to "make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD." Each morning, noon, and evening, this group was to stand and give thanks to God.

God told David to have the singers praising Him in the temple all day and night. They were to be paid just to sing. God wanted them to sing around the Ark because He loves to be thanked and adored. He uses it to fill the hearts of others with thanksgiving. So, when you hear the singers sing, thank God, join in, and worship from your heart.

### *From Thanksgiving to Glory*

When we are thankful, we always have an attitude of rejoicing (see Psalm 107:22). A husband will not have a problem with his wife if he's thankful to God for her from his heart. Likewise, a wife can overcome mountains if she is thankful to God from her heart. An alcoholic can be delivered if every morning and every night and all day long he thanks God for the victory from his heart.

The Bible says that when we are thankful, we pray more (Psalm 116:17). When we are thankful, we sing more (Psalm 147:7). When we supply the needs of others, there proceed many thanksgivings to God (2 Corinthians 9:12). Thanksgiving comes through us and we allow abundant grace to "redound to the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 9:11; 2 Corinthians 4:15).



Psalm 106:47 declares that *we live* thanking God, and we triumph in His praise. Isn't that good? The Bible is speaking to us, and it is still speaking today as much as it ever did.

*\*Read Pastor Stevens' booklet The Finished Work, Grace Publications, 1998.*

*Chapter Two*

## THE COVERING OF THANKSGIVING

“For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it” (Isaiah 28:20).

Coverings are so important.\* Thanksgiving serves as a covering against the attacks of the devil. But if we are not serving God with thanksgiving that comes from the heart, we will lack a vital covering. Husbands are to be a covering for their wives (Ephesians 5:23), yet unthankful husbands do not cover their wives. An unthankful wife will not cover her husband. Unthankful children will not cover their parents. Unthankful businessmen do not cover their employees. More than ever before, it is vital that we understand the value of having a heart of thanks so we will not rob ourselves or anyone else of a covering.

David wrote in Psalm 23:2, “He maketh me

to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." A thankful Christian is a green pasture for others. By sending out missionaries; by writing a letter; through booklets, radio, and television ministries; and through all of the outreaches, we become someone's green pasture. God help us to be green pastures for people in South America, Central America, the Middle East, the Far East, Africa, Europe, Australia, and right here in North America.

"Green pastures" speaks of mercy and Bible doctrine: "Cause me to rest in the merciful doctrine of Your Word." Green represents mercy, and a pasture represents spiritual food for the soul from the living Word of God. As thankful Christians, we become green pastures, living testimonies of the Truth to be "known and read of all men" (2 Corinthians 3:2).

It is wonderful to be a green pasture for those battling a serious disease, like cancer. So many in our church have been faithful in their call to minister, comfort, and identify with those patients and their families. We are thankful for each one who serves.

I know a pastor with a great gift of humor who will do whatever it takes to make people laugh, which breaks the atmosphere of tension

and stress and helps people to relax. He is enabled to preach and is often broken because of an attitude of thanks and a humble spirit full of praise. He is thankful from his heart.

### *Clothed with the New Covenant*

So often when God was dealing with the backslidden children of Israel, He would describe in great detail how He would cover them in fine linen (Ezekiel 16:6-14). His New Covenant not only covers our sins—past, present, and future—but also covers every single thing in our lives. Though God will shake what can be shaken in our lives, He declares to His people, “I will surely cover thee” (see Isaiah 22:17).

Christians need to realize this and understand that we are never to judge or attack one another. We are hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). We are to be so hid with Christ that Satan can’t make a case against us—even when we are guilty. That is what being “hid” really means.

For example, in Zechariah 3:1-4, Satan had made a list of all the sins of Joshua the high priest. But when he presented it to the Lord in the courtroom of heaven, Jesus Christ stood up and told Satan to shut up and get out of there.

Then He said, “Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.” Joshua’s garments were filthy, yet Jesus said, “Get him some clean clothes.” The Lord wouldn’t listen to a single accusation against Joshua.

Now, we know we are supposed to repent, but do you know there is no record of Joshua even saying, “I’m sorry”? And when Satan accuses us, until we do it again, God takes away our penalty—even if we *don’t repent*—though we are still left with the consequences of our sin. Whatever judgment we were judicially worthy of is added to the devil’s eternal degrees of punishment, which he will endure in hell forever.

Satan is in a very different place in hell than where unsaved people are. Degree after degree of judgment is added to him because of the sins of those he accuses. His punishment in hell will be far worse than that of the unsaved person who goes there. Think of how many people, by God’s grace, we can be a covering for. To be part of a ministry that has God’s heart for the lost is something I am so thankful for.

*Colored by Royalty*

“But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach

of men, and despised of the people” (Psalm 22:6). In this passage, Jesus is speaking about His life, identifying Himself as a worm. Actually, there is a special kind of worm, which when squashed produces a very costly purple dye that was used to color the curtains in the tabernacle (Exodus 26:1-6; 35:6-12). The curtains, used as a covering in the holy of holies, were blue, scarlet, and purple, clasped together by gold. This revealed a fantastic covering of resurrection life. Blue represents Deity, and scarlet points to the humanity of Jesus, which was required for a perfect sacrifice. Purple, however, represents the hypostatic union of God in Man—the royalty of Jesus Christ, the King of kings.

Thanks be to God, when Jesus went to the grave two thousand years ago, retroactively we went with Him. Our sins, our iniquities, and the old nature were buried there and cast into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). Can you see the picture? When Jesus was raised from the dead, we were raised with Him positionally. When He ascended, He took us with Him, and we are now seated together with the Lord Jesus Christ who covers us with His resurrection life. The effects of our sins have been canceled, though we must confess any known sin and isolate it to maintain

our fellowship with Christ in the light and avoid chastisement.

“We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his [resurrection] life” (Romans 5:10). We have great joy in our salvation, and the covering of that great joy is our strength! For this, we are truly grateful.

*\*Read Coverings, by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

*Chapter Three*  
**A PASTOR'S  
THANKSGIVING PRAYER**

What follows is a poem written to express a pastor's love to the people in his church.

Dear Lord, I come to you today  
in my own simple "Stevens'" way,  
to lift my heart and try to pray  
and tell You what I want to say;  
Oh, thank You on this Thanksgiving Day.

For my dear wife who is so true,  
who lives and prays for each thing I do,  
and is always there to say, " I love you";  
To hold my hand through many storms,  
always willing to wear her crown of thorns;  
I'm thankful.

For my dear son Paul and his sweet wife



who stayed with Dad through  
attacks and strife.  
They never turned from their call  
and are such a blessing to us all.  
I'm thankful for Natalie's sweet little calls.  
For June, Barbara's mom, who does so much,  
A willing heart, a laid-down life,  
her loving touch.  
For all of my grandchildren, near and far,  
who are constantly blessing  
their sweet "Papa";  
For family who show they care,  
even with a silent prayer;  
For Beauty, the dog, who runs and jumps  
when I get home,  
then at my feet, quiet and still,  
waits for a bone.  
(Hoping for a snack to eat,  
but never follows at my feet);  
And for Muffin and Comfort,  
I will not leave out,  
who love the yard and run about;  
I'm thankful.

For all of the heartaches, trials, and pain,  
which taught us that to give is gain.  
For our dear folks who help sustain;

For clouds, and storms, and chilling rain;  
For lonely days of stress and strain,  
that make us shout,

“Lord, please come again!”

For those who have stood close by my side,  
with whom I’ve laughed and mourned  
and cried,  
and sung, and wept, and smiled, and sighed;  
who stood so tall and helped me share  
my heavy load, and hurt and care;  
Who’ve had the love to bravely dare  
to undergird and help me bear  
the load, when days were not so fair;  
For those who helped possess the land  
and followed me, and held my hand,  
though oft’ they could not understand;  
I’m thankful.

For deliverance from pork and fat,  
and pizzas, and such things as that;  
From alcohol that sinners drink—  
it’s only fit for the kitchen sink;  
From the greasy foods, and sweets too—  
the things not best for me to chew,  
iniquities that I once knew.  
(Don’t get offended; we’re just having fun.

I might have some french fries  
when this is done!)  
For bees that make their nectar sweet  
and make health foods for us to eat,  
I'm thankful.

For a faithful staff to share the work,  
who never loaf and never shirk  
the task they have been asked to do  
but stand beside me, strong and true;  
For loved ones who are oft denied  
my presence at their lonely side;  
For deacons tested through the years  
who calmly share with me my fears;  
For shut-ins who abide in prayer,  
who constantly my burden share;  
For the Deaf who make me understand,  
they love me with their speaking hands;  
For nursery folks whose time is spent  
enduring a most dreaded scent.  
Eye cannot see, nor tongue can tell  
the odors they are required to smell!  
(God bless these oft neglected saints  
who love our kids and change their pants.)  
For all these dear ones, Lord, I say  
Thank You! for sending them my way.

For the blessed fact that when I'm gone  
the work down here will go right on.  
To know that when I'm in the air  
Those left will know Your tender care.  
For all of those who now "moon-light,"  
an extra job they work at night,  
to help to win our biggest fight,  
I'm thankful.

For those who make the tapes and help  
write the books,  
who type the letters and print and file,  
who keep the office in fine style;  
For those who play the instruments,  
and those who plan some main events,  
such as communion and baptisms too,  
and other special jobs, to name a few;  
I'm thankful.

For all the secretaries who serve so well,  
a special group of spiritual girls;  
For Jeannie and Dottie's telephone  
service to all,  
with godly cheer they answer the call.  
For the Friday night prayer group that prays  
and help us get through all of our days;  
For security: men who serve and wait

aware of each scheduled date,  
Who freely give of their time  
to protect our people and keep them fine;  
For Dick Colby and his crew,  
the many projects that they do,  
expressing Christ all the way through;  
For Ron who helps and helps again,  
who does a great job and is a dear friend.  
Then there's the restaurant—  
    they all work so hard,  
frying the french fries in “glorified” lard!  
I'm thankful.

For Dr. Lewis, a “Jonathan” friend,  
who's determined to serve  
    with me to the end.  
For Kathy, his wife, who works and serves  
like few on earth, with great spiritual nerves.  
For Pastor R. and Diane, his wife,  
who love our people out of strife,  
who serve and love with all their heart,  
and made a commitment never to part.  
They really understand their call  
and are loved so deeply by us all.  
I'm thankful.

For President Sutorius and the faculty too:  
What a dedicated faithful few,  
who train our students with great care  
to take this message everywhere.  
For the president's wife, Mary—  
    one of a kind,  
and their faithful family right behind.  
For our great teachers in the day school,  
who with grace enforce each rule.  
They teach and love to fulfill their call.  
They start anew with joy each fall.  
For Pastor Baker and Sylvia too,  
who work long hours, and not just a few.  
I'm thankful.

For businessmen who love the Lord's work  
and hire me as a consultant  
so I will not financially hurt;  
For these men who give so much  
after receiving God's heavenly touch;  
For the congregation digging deep  
when the offerings are down  
    and bills are steep;  
For our people who give out of their need  
because inside is God's precious Seed;  
I'm thankful.

For the faithful folks who go abroad,  
with ready feet that are spiritually shod.  
Pastors Tom and Scibelli too,  
and Pastor DeMeo and all of their crew;  
Pastor Schollaert and all the rest—  
To win the lost, they do their best.  
For all the pastors in the states—  
Our faithful friends, on God they wait;  
They play a part in our vision too,  
serving in Jerusalem to see it through;  
And I'm thankful.

For all the tears and smiles and fun;  
For every laugh and every pun;  
The way You have helped  
    and how You've led,  
and for the Blood that You have shed.  
For all the times You've heard me say,  
"Who gives this lovely bride away?"  
For all the sinners who have knelt,  
For all the joys that we have felt;  
As Jesus washed their sins away  
so they could sing, "O Happy Day!"  
I'm thankful.

Thank You, Lord, for loyal people here,  
who for these years have stood so near,  
to pray and give and love and cheer,  
through victories, losses, faith, and fear.  
And please, dear Father, find a way  
to show them my dear love today.  
And one last word before I'm through:  
Greater Grace folks, I love you!  
*I'm so thankful.*



## CONCLUSION

“Out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry...” (Jeremiah 30:19). Thanksgiving that proceeds from the heart blesses God. It comes out of us, and when it does, the house of the Lord will be filled with God’s presence. When we sing and our hearts are filled with thanksgiving, then our homes will be filled with the presence of God. How great is our God! And before Him, we are not small.

*Dear heavenly Father, thank You! We pray that these words will release individuals to experience the victory that comes with thanksgiving. We receive Your love to release us and to express Your greatness in every area of our lives. In Jesus’ precious name we pray. Amen.*