

A Key to Unlock God's Miracle-Working Power



Thanksgiving, Praise, and Worship (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue to study together the rich and exciting theme of thanksgiving.

Yesterday I spoke about thanksgiving as a requirement for entering God's presence. I explained the two stages of approach to God that are presented in Psalm 100:4-5, where the psalmist says:

> "Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name. For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations."

I pointed out that there are two phases of access there, first the gates and second the courts. We're exhorted to enter God's gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. In other words, thanksgiving is the initial phase of approach to God.

Today I'm going to deal with another tremendously important aspect of thanksgiving. I'm going to speak about thanksgiving as a key to unlock the miracle-working power of God.

I'm going to take my first example from the story of Jonah. Probably you recall the story of this disobedient prophet, Jonah, who lived in Gath-hepher, the mountains of Galilee. God spoke to him and told him to go with a message to the Gentile city of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, but it didn't suit Jonah to go to Nineveh, so Jonah ran away from the Lord. He went exactly the opposite direction. God told him to go east; he went west. It's worth noticing that from the moment Jonah turned his back on God, every step that he took after that was a step downward. He went down from the mountain to the coastal plain. He went down from the coastal plain to the city. He went down from the city to the harbor. He went down from the harbor into the ship, and you know the rest of the story. From the ship he went down into the very depths of the sea. But there God's mercy reached him. God had prepared a great fish that swallowed up Jonah and Jonah spent the next three days and nights in

the belly of the fish.

Jonah chapter 2 records the prayer that Jonah prayed there in the fish's belly. I'm sure there was plenty of motivation to pray in that situation. The prayer is interesting. It begins with a lot of praying and a lot of crying out to God, and apparently nothing changes in Jonah's circumstances. But then in verse 9 Jonah changes the way he's praying and he says this to the Lord:

> "But I will sacrifice to Thee with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed, I will pay. Salvation is from the Lord. Then the Lord commanded the fish and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land."

Notice what produced results. It wasn't just praying. It wasn't just crying out. But when Jonah started to give thanks, things happened. Jonah's thanksgiving triggered the Lord's mercy and brought his deliverance. May I offer that to you as a suggestion? Perhaps you may feel that you're somehow in the belly of the fish and you've cried and prayed and there doesn't seem to be any answer. Why not do what Jonah did? Start to give God thanks. That's a wonderful expression of faith to thank God from the belly of the fish and it touches God's heart and it moves Him to do something on our behalf.

You see, there's an important principle involved there, the principle that faith is of no avail without works, without deeds, without appropriate action. This principle is stated twice. In James 2:20:

> "You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?"

And again in verse 26:

> "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."

So just to say we have faith and do nothing about it is of no effect. Faith must be accompanied by appropriate action. Now, when Jonah was there in the belly of the fish, he didn't have many options. Really, there was only one thing he could do to express his faith. What was that? To thank God and that expression of faith was sufficient.

I'd like to say this, that thanking God is the simplest possible expression of our faith in Him. It's very, very important. Often when we pray without thanking God, what we have is faith without works and the Bible says that's useless. So remember when there's nothing else you can do to demonstrate that you have faith, giving thanks to God is the simplest expression of your faith and one that really works.

Now I'd like to take some examples from the ministry of Jesus Himself which show us the tremendous power that's latent in giving thanks, how giving thanks can release the greatest miracles. Two of the greatest miracles in the earthly ministry of Jesus were triggered by His giving thanks. The first is the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. You'll recall that five thousand men, plus women and children, probably a group of more than ten thousand persons, had been with Jesus a long while. They were in a desert place, there was nothing for them to eat and they were hungry. And Jesus said, "What are we going to give them to eat?" Andrew said, "Well, there's a boy here with five loaves and two fishes, but what is that among so many?" Jesus simply took the five loaves and this is what He did, it's recorded in John 6:11:

> "Jesus therefore took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted."

Notice the simplicity. It doesn't say that Jesus prayed. All He did was give thanks, but His giving thanks released the miracle-working power of God to make five loaves and two fishes sufficient to feed a multitude of ten thousand persons. It's interesting that a little further on in the same chapter the gospel writer returns to this incident and this is what he says in John 6:23:

> "There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks."

In other words, the gospel writer is commenting on the fact that it was the Lord's giving thanks that released that tremendous miracle of feeding the five thousand.

Look on again also in John 11, perhaps the greatest miracle, in a sense, in the ministry of Jesus: the raising of Lazarus from the tomb after he's been there four days. This is the record:

> "And so they removed the stone, and Jesus raised His eyes and said, 'Father, I thank Thee that Thou heardest Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people standing around I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send Me.' And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.' He who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was

> wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him and let him go.'"

Notice the same principle again. Jesus didn't pray to the Father. He simply gave thanks to the Father. And having given thanks, He was able to give that command of faith that brought out of the tomb a man who'd lain there four days dead.

See the tremendous potential of giving thanks to release God's miracle-working power in our lives? Not merely does giving thanks release the miracle-working power of God, but after God's miracle-working power has been set in operation in our lives, giving thanks sets the seat on the blessings we've already received. It makes them permanent. There's a beautiful example of this in he story of the ten lepers who met Jesus. I'll read this account from Luke 17:12-19:

> "As Jesus was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met Him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, 'Jesus, Master, have pity on us?' When He saw them He said, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he was he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked Him and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, 'Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' Then He said to him, 'Rise and go, your faith has made you well.'"

It's important to note the different words that are used in the various phases of that story. All ten lepers were cleansed. All were healed physically. But something completely extra, and the most important thing of all, happened to the one man who returned to give Him thanks. Jesus said to him in verse 19:

> "Rise and go, your faith has made you well."

That's the English translation, but the word translated in Greek is sozo, which is the standard Greek word for "to save." And the word sozo nearly always indicates something more than merely physical or temporary provision of God. It's the all-inclusive word for salvation.

So you see there was an important difference between the nine who were healed physically and the tenth who came back to give God thanks and was not merely healed physically, but he was saved. His soul was saved. He was brought into a right eternal relationship with God. The nine lepers received a blessing that was partial and temporary. The tenth received a blessing that was total and permanent. What made the difference? It was giving thanks that made the difference.

The same is true in our lives; giving thanks for blessings already received sets the seal of permanence upon them. Notice that thankfulness often goes with humility. The man who came back was the man who thought himself the least worthy. The others were Jews. They took their blessings for granted, but the Samaritan knew he didn't deserve it and so he came back to thank Jesus. And he got the extra, eternal permanent blessing.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll continue with this theme of thanksgiving, but I'll be looking at the opposite side of the coin, unthankfulness. I'll be dealing with the subtle snare of unthankfulness and all the disastrous consequences that follow in its train.

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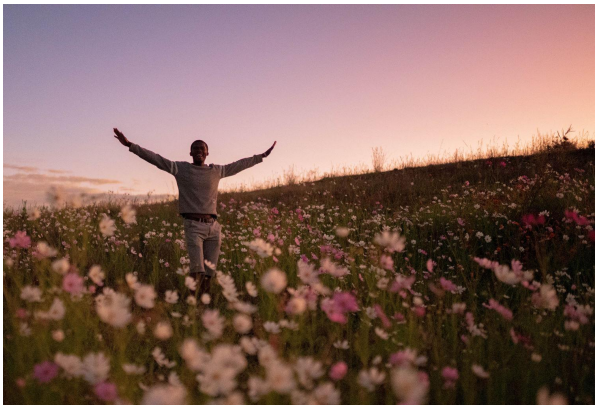
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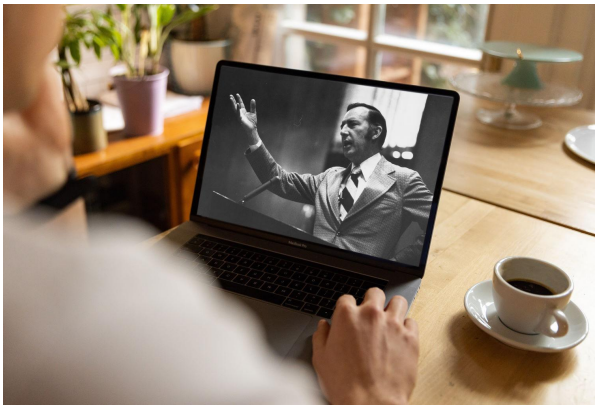
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