

Religious Liberty



Thoughts for Thanksgiving (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you keys to successful living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry. In our American calendar this is a special week. It's the week in which, as a nation, we celebrate Thanksgiving. Many of your personal and family arrangements for this week will center around this fact. The messages that I'll be bringing you throughout this week will also center around this theme. The title I've chosen for my talks this week is "Thoughts for Thanksgiving."

But first, let me say "Thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please take time to write, even if it's only a brief note.

Now, back to our theme for this week, "Thoughts for Thanksgiving." First of all, let's remind ourselves how important it is to be thankful and to give thanks. The Bible has a great deal to say about this. For an example of this principle today, I'm going to turn to an incident in the ministry of Jesus recorded in 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 saw 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 see the lesson in that incident. Nine of those lepers were physically healed but the tenth, the only one who came back to give Jesus thanks was more than healed. The English translation that I read says "your faith has made you

well," but the Greek word is "your faith has saved you." That's much more than just being made well. That's something that affects not only the body but the soul. That's something that's valid not only for time but for eternity. You see, the nine lepers received a blessing which was temporary and only physical but the tenth leper, because he returned to give Jesus thanks, received a blessing which was both physical and spiritual. And, also he received a blessing that was eternal. The difference was made by his returning to give thanks. And the Scripture says he was a foreigner.

Now, I believe this lesson applies to us in the United States at this time. We are the recipients of countless blessings, many of which are denied to the people of most other nations. But, whether we receive the full benefit of these blessings or not will depend on how we respond. Are we going to be like the nine lepers who just receive the blessings and don't ever return to give God thanks, or are we going to be like that tenth leper who returned to give thanks and received so much more by way of blessing than the other nine?

In a way, I feel a little bit like that Samaritan, that foreigner. Perhaps I ought to explain my background briefly. Most of you are aware that I was not born an American. Actually, it might surprise you to know that I was born in India of British parents. And I was reared and educated in Britain. And then, I've traveled in many different lands, I've resided in many different lands. As I look back over my life, I realize that I've resided about nine years in Asia, about eight years in Africa, something like thirty years in Europe. I also spent a complete year in Canada before I came to the United States. I came to the United States just as a visitor in 1963, but here I am, I've been living here ever since. God intervened and showed me that I was to take my place of residence in this country and in 1970 I took American citizenship. I tell my American friends, "You're Americans by birth but I'm an American by choice." And I believe because of this background, in many ways I'm able to view the situation in America more objectively than most Americans because I have standards of reference that most Americans do not have.

And so each day this week, because it's Thanksgiving week, I want to focus with you on some particular aspect of American life for which I believe we need to thank God. Let's make sure we're not like the nine lepers who received the blessing and never came back to say thank you. Let's make sure we're like that tenth leper who came back and gave God thanks and received the fullness of the blessing which the others missed. So as I've said, each day I'm going to focus on something special for which to thank God in the United States.

Today I want to thank God for the religious liberty which we enjoy in this nation. So many times in the United States we take our religious liberty for granted. Think of the liberty I have to bring this message to you, the liberty you have to hear it and obey it without fear of persecution or secret police or some kind of sanctions against you. Contrast some other country. Think about countries like Albania, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, where it's forbidden either to preach or to receive the gospel on pain of death. Or think about other countries where liberty is greatly circumscribed, where those who listen are in danger from informers or secret police, where there are social and economic penalties, penalties that limit your education and your social privilege. Or countries in Europe where there is complete civil liberty and yet radio and television are controlled by the state and only programs that are approved by the state have any opportunity to be aired over nationwide radio or television.

So you see, we here in the United States have so much by way of religious liberty which is denied to people in most other countries. So, I want to ask you to agree with me today to thank God for our religious liberty and, in particular, for this radio ministry which is coming to you just now. Would you pause and just say "Thank you" to God for one moment?

Each week I receive letters from listeners thanking me for the help and the blessing they receive from this ministry. And so, each day this week, as a part of my personal thanksgiving, I'm going to read to you from one or more of such letters that I receive. For instance, here's a letter from a lady in Kansas City. She writes:

> "My husband and I are greatly blessed by your radio ministry. God truly teaches us through you. We are both Catholics who have known the Lord for a few years. Since we have no Scriptural teaching in our background, we would appreciate it if you could send us your Self Study Bible Course. We have been searching for a Bible study we can study together and we believe the Lord would have us use yours."

Thank God for that lady and her husband. Then, from Washington, D.C.:

> "Your radio program has been a wonderful help to me. Our family is not united in faith and so I am without fellowship. Your program has been my place of teaching and it has helped me not to feel cut off from the rest of the Body of Christ. Please pray for our family that we might find our place in the Body of Christ and that we

> might serve God in united faith."

And then a lady in New England writes:

> "Words cannot express how I feel about your ministry. As far as I'm concerned, you have been a direct line from heaven and I continually praise God for His ministry to me through you."

Those are just samples of letters that we get every week. So, I just want to thank God for the privilege of being able to give out His word and receive such a response from my listeners across this nation.

Radio Program

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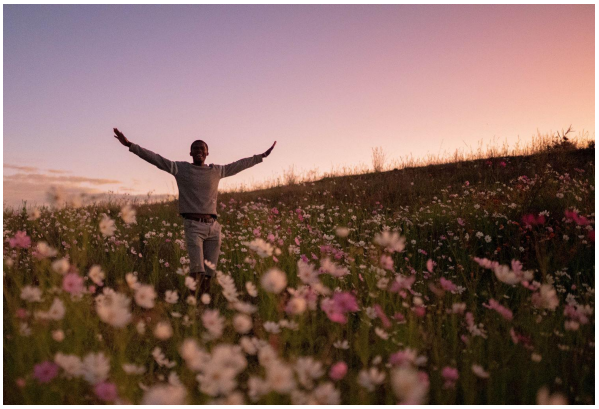

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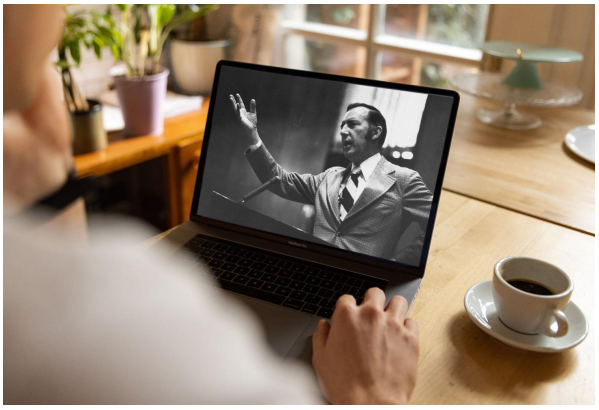

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