

My Personal Gratitude



Let's Show Our Gratitude (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as I continue with our special theme for this week, "Let's Show Our Gratitude."

In my introductory talk yesterday, I gave a brief overview of the historical background of Thanksgiving. I quoted several passages from my book, Shaping History Through Prayer and Fasting, passages which were, in turn, quotations from the book, Of Plymouth Plantation, by William Bradford, who was the leader of the original group of Pilgrims and the first governor of Plymouth Colony.

These quotations from Bradford provided some important and revealing insights concerning the Pilgrims, insights which, I'm afraid, many Americans today have either forgotten or overlooked. I would like to emphasize particularly, three aspects of the Pilgrims. First of all, the kind of men they were. They were men of deep conviction. Their convictions were based on one supreme source, the Bible, and they came because they had studied the Bible, believed the Bible and wanted to live the Bible out. In a certain sense, the Bible, the Word of God, was the seed that they brought with them that was planted in this continent.

Secondly, their motives. They did not come for selfish motives. It has sometimes been said the Spaniards went to South America for gold, but the Pilgrims came for Christ. Their motives were to be able to live out their convictions in freedom, in political freedom. They did not want to oppress others, they did not want to coerce others, but they wanted the liberty to live out their own personal convictions and their convictions, as I've said, were based directly on the Bible.

And then, the third aspect of Thanksgiving that I emphasized in my talk yesterday, was that Thanksgiving commemorates a very dramatic miracle which came in answer to prayer. If you are celebrating Thanksgiving this week in any way bear in mind you're celebrating a miracle. Something that would not have happened if believers had not united in public prayer and in seeking God. And the answer to their prayer came in a very clear, dramatic intervention of God that changed the climate, the weather, and saved the harvest.

So bear those three things in mind, please, throughout this week. Think about the kind of men the Pilgrims were, think about their motives and remember that Thanksgiving

commemorates a miracle in answer to prayer.

In my talk today, I want to take our theme for this week, "Let's Show Our Gratitude," and apply it in a personal way to my own life; in a certain sense, I want to be an example. I want to share with you some of the reasons why I personally am grateful to the United States. You have to understand that I was not born an American. I imagine that my voice tells you that even if I don't. (Although my dear British friends now tell me that I no longer talk like a Britisher. So, really, it's hard for me to know just exactly where I stand in that respect.)

But, I came to the United States as an immigrant. I was an accidental immigrant. I didn't intend to emigrate. I had spent five years on the mission field in East Africa and then a year in Canada ministering to churches there. And a pastor, who is a friend of mine, who had pastored a church in the Midwest, invited me for a six-month visit to this country to be an associate pastor with him for that period. Well, I came with my first wife, Lydia, and we brought with us our little adopted African black daughter, who was then about five years old. When we got to the United States' border, the immigration officials told us that six months was too long for a visit. We had no real documents for Joska to prove who she was or why we'd got her because of the circumstances of her adoption in Africa, so I just cast myself on the mercy of the Immigration Department and said, "Maybe you can help us." And I want to testify, with real gratitude, that I dealt a great deal in that time with the Immigration Department and I received unfailing courtesy and kindness. Today it's so fashionable to criticize the departments of our government but I want to do the opposite. I want to say they were very good to me and it's out of their kindness that I'm here in the United States so many years later a United States' citizen. And I want to say that, generally speaking, as a Britisher with my own particular background and philosophy and outlook, I have experienced a most wonderful acceptance in this nation.

Now, I'm brought up in Britain as a member of the Anglican Church, but today my convictions and my experiences have led me outside that particular church. And so many times, even today in Europe, a person with my attitude would be classified as sectarian; dismissed as somebody that's right off the track.

Probably many of you Americans don't appreciate the tremendous liberty and tolerance that there is in matters of religion in this country. But I'm grateful for it. I've found here acceptance and enlargement. My ministry has been tremendously enlarged. One of the most exciting things that I've experienced in the United States is fellowship with outstanding Christian leaders from all backgrounds: Protestant, Catholic, Charismatic, non-Charismatic, independent, denominational. I have cherished personal friendships with leaders today in the work of Christ from all those backgrounds in this country. I think I could say that it was here, in the United States, I really discovered the Body of Christ. I am aware, of course, that there's a great deal of division and intolerance even here in America, but that's not my main impression. My main impression is acceptance, enlargement and warm fellowship. And so, at this season of Thanksgiving I want to be among the first to give God thanks publicly, through my radio ministry, for these blessings and I want to challenge you to cultivate a thankful attitude and express your thanks throughout this week.

I want to close this talk with one specific item for Thanksgiving in connection with the United States and my personal experiences in this country. Not only have I found fellowship with the body of Christ but through the support and the encouragement of American Christians from many backgrounds this nation and this country has become a base for me for worldwide outreach. Today I have an outreach that extends through messages recorded on cassette, through my books and through personal ministry to many other countries in the world. It's no exaggeration to say that God has privileged me with this ministry of mine to reach millions of people around the earth.

I met a minister from the country of Nepal, a small country in the North of India. And he told me how he had been blessed through articles that I had written in a magazine. And I just marveled that out of this base here, in this nation, my ministry and my messages have reached into that distant land of Nepal where there's such a tremendous need for Christian ministry and Christian material. And that's just one of countless examples of how, from my base here in the United States, my ministry has reached really around the world. And I want to acknowledge, with deep gratitude, the base that God has given me here. The material base, the financial base, the support of committed believers. All these things I have in a degree and in a measure which I do not believe I would have ever had in any other country that I know of today.

And so, at this season of Thanksgiving, I want to give thanks for those things. And now I'm going to ask you to join with me in a brief prayer.

Father, we want to thank you today for all the blessings that we enjoy in this nation. I want to thank you personally for Your goodness to me through America and through the people of America and I want to ask you Lord, to give the people of this nation a true understanding and thankful

hearts at this season. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Radio Program

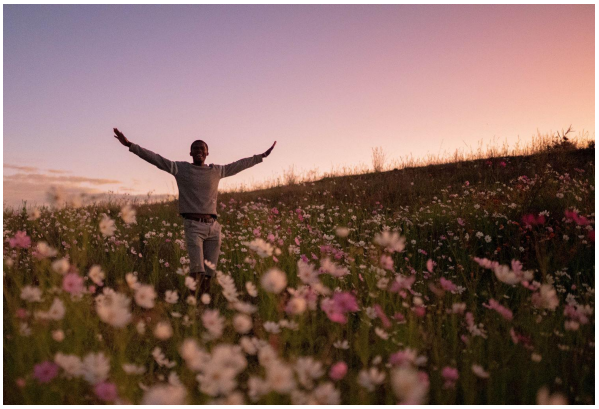
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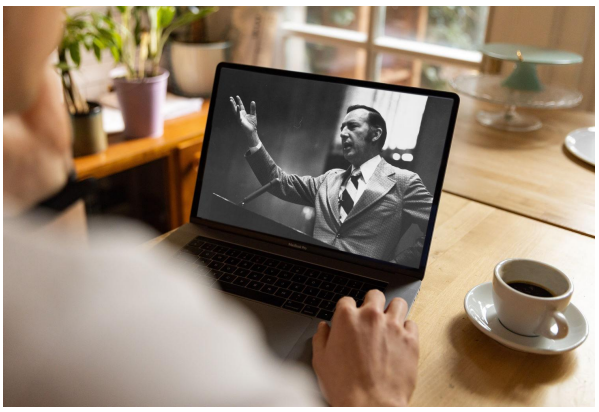
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