

“Thanksgiving”

Psalm 26

Verse seven is the focus of this message during this Thanksgiving time. What does “thanksgiving” mean according to the Bible? What is involved in our “thanksgiving?”

The definition of “thanksgiving” according to Webster’s 1828 dictionary (which is an excellent tool in understanding the meanings of words in the old KJV) is (in verb form – participle present tense) “rendering thanks for goods received.” As a noun, it is “the act of rendering thanks or expressing gratitude for favors or mercies.”

The peace offering, of which the sacrifice of thanksgiving was part, “was brought to the sanctuary out of the overflow of the worshiper’s heart...The peace offering was given under three circumstances – for thanksgiving, upon the payment of a vow, or as a free expression of the worshiper’s goodwill. Free will offerings were given in response to God’s unexpected or unsought generosity. A vow offering was brought to celebrate an answer to prayer after a person vowed to praise the Lord if He answered the worshiper’s prayer. The peace offering for thanksgiving...was given when someone was in dire need of deliverance.”

(Ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/peace-offering/)

The Hebrew word “todah” (thanksgiving) means “to extend the hand in adoration, avowal, or acceptance.” It means “to worship the Lord and to thank Him for things not yet received as well as for things already at hand.” It is “a confession of faith that God is supreme and able to do all things.”

In Hebrew letter understanding (each letter has a

significant meaning to it; a word-picture, if you would), the word "todah" is actually only three letters in Hebrew (Hebrew has no vowels, as such):

"The first letter is *Taw* which is the letter for truth. Jesus said that He is the Truth. The next letter is the *Daleth* which means a doorway to the third letter *Hei* which is the presence of God. Our thanksgiving to Jesus for His sacrifice on the cross leads us to a doorway or portal to the presence of God and intimacy with Him."

(<https://www.chaimbentorah.com/2019/07/hebrew-word-study-thanksgiving/>)

Oxford Bible Church defines Towdah as the following: "to extend hands in faith, adoration and THANKSGIVING. This time the hands are raised in a receiving posture, reaching out in trust and surrender as we look up to God acknowledging Him as our Source. Thanksgiving starts with what God has done for us, but goes on to thank God for what He will do (a confession of faith). We are thanking Him for giving His Word (promise) and on that basis we thank Him for the answer before the manifestation. This is 'the sacrifice of thanksgiving' based on God's promises and character and TOWDAH is often used in this way (Psalm 107:22, 116:17, Jeremiah 17:26, 33:11).

I. THERE IS PRAISE INVOLVED IN THANKSGIVING – PSALM 100

A. The definition of "praise" in Webster's 1828 dictionary is: "Commendation bestowed on a person for his personal virtues or worthy actions, on meritorious actions themselves, or on any thing valuable; approbation expressed in words or song."

THE hundredth psalm has for its title, "A Psalm of praise," or "of thanksgiving," and to this description it well answers. There is not a single mournful note in the composition. God is praised from the beginning to the end, and all the earth is called upon to join in blessing and thanking him. It has been suggested that it was probably written to be chanted by a festive procession as it approached and entered the temple (see Psa_100:4). The whole runs on without any break or division. (Pulpit Commentary)

B. When it comes to "thanksgiving," one of the primary functions involved in how we demonstrate our thankfulness is with the attribute of "praise."

Hebrews 13:15

¹⁵ By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

C. Psalm 42:4 shows that when it comes to thanksgiving a very big part of our celebration is summed up in "praise."

Psalm 42:4

⁴ When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

D. The New Testament finds a similar usage of the word "thanks" as it relates to our praising God for what He's done.

Colossians 3:17

¹⁷ And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all

in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

¹⁸ In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

II. THERE IS A SACRIFICE INVOLVED IN THANKSGIVING – PSALM 107:19-22

A. This use is the first one found in the Bible in relation to the subject of "thanksgiving" – Lev. 7:12-13.

Leviticus 7:12-13

¹² If he offer it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil, of fine flour, fried.

¹³ Besides the cakes, he shall offer for his offering leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offerings.

B. This particular sacrifice or offering is one done of free will – in other words, it was not required by the Levitical Law (was not required by God for a right standing with Him).

Leviticus 22:29

²⁹ And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer it at your own will.

C. The point made here is on "sacrifice" – there is a cost involved in our "thanksgiving," and it's a cost we are to be more than willing to make.

D. Psalm 50:23 gives a clear understanding of what the Lord thinks of our willingness to sacrifice for Him in our praise and thanksgiving.

Psalm 50:23

²³ Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

Towdah [thanksgiving, praise] is in a causative form [used to show that someone assigns something to someone else] and what it brings about is described in Psalm 50:23: "Whoever offers the sacrifice of thanksgiving (TOWDAH) glorifies Me; and He establishes a High-Way by which I will show (manifest) the salvation of God (the promise)" (literal translation). "A song of praise (TOWDAH) for the Lord's faithfulness to His people" (Psalm 100:1). - (<http://towdahradio.com/the-meaning-of-towdah/>)

III. THERE IS CONFESSION INVOLVED IN THANKSGIVING – JOSHUA 7:19; CF. EZRA 10:11

A. The same word translated "thanksgiving" and "praise" is here, and in Ezra 10:11, translated "confession" in some versions of the Bible, while others translate it as "give thanks" or "give praise."

Ezra 10:11

¹¹ Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.

B. The Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) translates the Hebrew word "todah" as "confession" in these two verses, showing very early (either before the time of Christ or very shortly thereafter – it's debatable when the Septuagint was written) that the word "confession" was correct. The Greek word (exomologeō) means to agree, confess.

C. Along with praise and thanksgiving there will ultimately be a confession on our part, recognizing ourselves as sinful in the presence of a holy God. As we praise and give thanks, it is important we do not forget this aspect of the principle.

D. The verse before us in Joshua shows a very important truth about thanksgiving and giving God the glory – that confessing our sin will do just that.

"Give glory to the Lord:" this is a solemn formula of adjuration, by which a person was summoned to confess the truth before the face of God (cf. John 9:24). "And give Him praise:" ...Through a confession of the truth Achan was to render to God, as the Omniscient, the praise and honour that were due. (K&D Commentary)

[John 9:24](#)

²⁴ Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

E. If we want our sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise to be acceptable to the Lord

then we are going to have to present it to Him with a humble spirit and a broken heart for the sins we have committed. And, as was seen in the introduction to this message, the sacrifice of thanksgiving was one of anticipation of an answer for a dire need. If we are going to have that need met, then confession will need to be part of our praise to Him for what He is about to do, as well as what He has done.

Conclusion: Thanksgiving at Plymouth

In September 1620, a small ship called the Mayflower left Plymouth, England, carrying 102 passengers—an assortment of religious separatists seeking a new home where they could freely practice their faith and other individuals lured by the promise of prosperity and land ownership in the New World. After a treacherous and uncomfortable crossing that lasted 66 days, they dropped anchor near the tip of Cape Cod, far north of their intended destination at the mouth of the Hudson River. One month later, the Mayflower crossed Massachusetts Bay, where the Pilgrims, as they are now commonly known, began the work of establishing a village at Plymouth.

Throughout that first brutal winter, most of the colonists remained on board the ship, where they suffered from exposure, scurvy and outbreaks of contagious disease. Only half of the Mayflower's original passengers and crew lived to see their first New England spring. In March, the remaining settlers moved ashore, where they received an astonishing visit from an Abenaki Indian who greeted them in English.

Several days later, he returned with another Native American, Squanto, a member of the Pawtuxet tribe who had been kidnapped by an English sea captain and sold into slavery before escaping to London and returning to his homeland on an exploratory expedition. Squanto taught the Pilgrims, weakened by malnutrition and illness, how to cultivate corn, extract sap from maple trees, catch fish in the rivers and avoid poisonous plants. He also helped the settlers forge an alliance with the Wampanoag, a local tribe, which would endure for more than 50 years and tragically remains one of the sole examples of harmony between European colonists and Native Americans.

In November 1621, after the Pilgrims' first corn harvest proved successful, Governor William Bradford organized a celebratory feast and invited a group of the fledgling colony's Native American allies, including the Wampanoag chief Massasoit. Now remembered as America's "first Thanksgiving"—although the Pilgrims themselves may not have used the term at the time—the festival lasted for three days. While no record exists of the first Thanksgiving's exact menu, much of what we know about what happened at the first Thanksgiving comes from Pilgrim chronicler Edward Winslow, who wrote:

"Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruits of our labors; they four in one day killed as much fowl, as with a little help beside, served the

Company almost a week, at which time amongst other Recreations, we exercised our Arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and amongst the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five Deer, which they brought to the Plantation and bestowed on our Governor, and upon the Captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."

Historians have suggested that many of the dishes were likely prepared using traditional Native American spices and cooking methods. Because the Pilgrims had no oven and the Mayflower's sugar supply had dwindled by the fall of 1621, the meal did not feature pies, cakes or other desserts, which have become a hallmark of contemporary celebrations.

(as found at history.com)

As we celebrate our Thanksgiving Day this year, keep in mind both that first Thanksgiving Day and their praise to the "goodness of God," and, more importantly, the "sacrifice of thanksgiving" that was offered by those that were in need, praising and thanking God in advance for what He was about to do. We can look back on the past year and thank God for His bounty – but will we remember to look ahead and thank Him for His goodness?

In it all, do not fail to praise Him for His redeeming work on the cross when He paid our sin debt and provided us a way to have victory over sin here and an eternity with Him in heaven.