

Thanksgiving in Adversity **Philippians 1:3-4 (NKJV)**

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,

That first Thanksgiving was not a culmination of continuing prosperity and success.

I went back again this year and reread the story of the Pilgrims landing in Plymouth and the terrible first winter that saw their number almost cut in half. I believe only four for those who were wives survived. Many children died and sometimes even whole families.

That next spring the Mayflower sailed back to England with none of the Pilgrims even though the captain offered to take them back.

That spring and summer was filled with heavy toil and planting of crops in order to survive the next winter. And God had blessed them with grain and much wildlife for food.

They were blessed by their Indian friends, especially Squanto who had made their crops more fruitful.

So they declare a day of thanksgiving to God for the new land and their religious freedom that they now enjoyed. And they had a great feast that lasted several days.

So as I thought of all that, I realized that real genuine thanksgiving often comes out of some of the worst adversity.

I. The prodigal son

A. I thought of the story of the Prodigal Son who was totally unthankful while he was at home in the father's house surrounded with plenty.

1. Luke 15:11–13 (NKJV)

2. 11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. 13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country

B. It was not until he had lost all that he had that he thought he might be thankful to just be a servant in his father's house.

1. Luke 15:13–17 (NKJV)

2. 13 . . . and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. 14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. 15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

- C. But we know he received so much more than to simply be a hired servant.
 - 1. Luke 15:18–19 (NKJV)
 - 2. 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.” ’

- D. His father threw a thanksgiving party the likes of which the older brother had never seen.
 - 1. Luke 15:20–24 (NKJV)
 - 2. 20 “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ 22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. 23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; 24 for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.

- E. But the older brother who had never known adversity could not enter into the time of thanksgiving.
 - 1. Luke 15:28–32 (NKJV)
 - 2. 28 “But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. 29 So he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’ 31 “And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. 32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’ ”

II. In the days of Nehemiah

- A. Nehemiah 12:31 (NKJV)
 - 1. 31 So I brought the leaders of Judah up on the wall, and appointed **two large thanksgiving choirs**. One went to the right hand on the wall toward the Refuse Gate.

- B. Nehemiah 12:46 (NKJV)
 - 1. 46 For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chiefs of the singers, **and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God**.

III. The apostle Paul

A. We come now to our text.

1. Paul was in a Roman prison when he wrote our text.
 - a. When you were in prison the Roman government didn't feed you.
 - b. You had to provide for yourself, which is a little difficult since you are in prison.
2. But notice how thankful that he is.
3. Philippians 1:3-4 (NKJV)
 - a. 3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,
4. They had been generous to Paul by helping supply his needs.
5. Philippians 4:14–20 (NKJV)
6. 14 Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.
7. 15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. 16 For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.
8. 17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. 18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. 19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. 20 Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

B. So they had ministered to Paul in the time of imprisonment.

C. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NKJV)

1. 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.