

# THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD SERIES

## SPIRIT OF THANKSGIVING

We are on a series of the Practice of the Presence of God. Last Sunday we spoke about the daily presence and how we need to live our lives daily, moment by moment for His presence. And not to set our gear forward and start worrying or keep looking backwards and start being feel condemned. But for moment to moment, we practice the presence of God. And that was on the area of the daily presence that is just point one.

This morning we will share on point two. And we are giving you keys to practice the presence of God. All of us desire His presence to be with us, upon us all the time. We desire to experience His presence wherever we go, whether we are in a car or in a supermarket in a prayer meeting in church or on the streets. We want to experience this tangible presence of His always around us and upon us. Paul had a revelation that in Him we live and move and have our being. Paul knows the daily presence of God.

The second key to practicing the presence of God is called the Spirit of thanksgiving. One of the most important truths that is simple and yet easily forgotten and practiced is the key of thanksgiving. Every time we take ourselves away into our worries and our anxieties we began to lose the presence of God. But every time you began to thank God, the presence of God began to build upon your life all over again. I would to challenge you at any time in your life when you don't feel the presence of God any more; when the worries of this life and the day to day activities cloud your mind and your memory all you have to do is pull yourself

back for a moment and begin to give thanks. Begin to thank God for your life, thank God for the sunshine, thank God for the day, thank God for your friends, thank God for His blessings, thank God for your good health and every time you begin to thank God the presence of God builds up.

The interesting thing is that it is not automatic. We have to train ourselves to give thanks. There are 3 vital areas that we need to learn how to give thanks.

## **1. Give Thanks in Everything**

No. 1 First Thessalonians 5:18 onwards and I believe he is talking about practicing the presence of God since in verse 17 he is talking about praying without ceasing, or having a consciousness of the spirit of prayer moving constantly in your life. All of us want to sense the presence of God in our lives all the time. Verse 18 *Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* All we have to do is give thanks in everything. He didn't say give thanks for everything. But here he says give thanks in everything. In every circumstance, in every situation, no matter how many problems assail you, no matter how many mountains stand before you, if you were to stop for moment and give thanks the presence of God will be right there. Giving thanks constantly is one of the immediate cures. We know that the world has a pill for everything. There are pills for headache there are pills for cold, there are pills for fever. There are pills for all these things. But there is no pill for worry. When someone is worried, there is no pill. There is an antidote for worry, thanksgiving. Every time you worry, you have moved out of the position of thanksgiving into fear and anxiety.

Paul mentioned thanksgiving not just one time but several times and I will read 2 little verses. First in the book of Colossians 3:15 *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.* Do you notice the connection between the peace of God in our hearts and being thankful? Being thankful is an important key to keep our peace. No matter how tense the situation if you learn to be thankful it changes the atmosphere.

Philippians 4:6-7 *Have no anxiety about everything, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* The peace of God will guard your heart and your mind. The word *guard* is the Greek word for *garrison* like a fortress to prevent any anxiety and any worry and any fear from coming in provided you give thanks. Give thanks for the little things for the big things in every thing give thanks to God.

In the book of Acts 16, we see a tremendous revival and a great move of the Holy Spirit. Paul was in prison and for a moment, it looks like his missionary journey was not working. He obeyed the Macedonian call, went to Philippi, preached the gospel, cast out devils and got into prison. Things were not working out fine. Maybe your life is like the life of the apostle Paul. You have obeyed your vision. Maybe some of you called to the ministry had gone into the ministry obeying the Macedonian call. Maybe some of you in the business world have obeyed the dream that God has placed in your life and you launch into the dream. And as you have launched forth, you did what you know was right. Of course, demonic forces come against you like Paul had. At first, there was no result, or maybe some small little result. And then the worst thing came. When you began to glorify the name of Jesus, worst things happened to you.

When Paul began to cast out the devil in Jesus name he said, "I adjure you, in the name of Jesus, come out." And the demon came out from the little girl. And he got himself into prison. It would be the easiest thing to say "Why Lord?" It would have been the easiest thing to say, "God I give up. The moment I get out of this prison I am not going to do your will any more." It would have been the easiest thing to say and complain to God. It would have been the easiest thing to blame God. But Paul and Silas at midnight with their back bruised and bleeding from the whipping they received, not understanding how things are going to work out, what can you do? Give thanks. In your problem, in your situation give thanks and the peace of God will come. "Thank God we are alive. Thank God, we are not dead. Thank God that I am not sick. Thank God that I have done God's will." When they gave thanks, the presence of God started coming. It was a spiritual earthquake that came into that place and the whole place was turned upside down. The chains were broken and

Paul was loosed at midnight.

Give thanks in your circumstances. It is a skill that we must be reminded constantly. Give thanks and don't worry. Many times, we tell people not to worry. It would be better for you to say, "Don't worry; give thanks." Immediately when you give thanks, your worries will be gone. That's the secret of God working in your life. What do you feel like when somebody stabs you at the back? You wouldn't feel like giving thanks. Remember this all the testing, the trials, the problems, the mountains and the darts of the devil thrown against you have only two objectives. No. 1 to steal the Word of God out of your life or the revelation that God has given you. That will be your future. No. 2 to steal the presence of God from your life. And if the devil cannot steal your joy, he cannot steal your strength. And if you choose by act of the will to give thanks, you retain the presence of God. Do you know that if the devil have not made you sick or have not destroyed you yet, but if the devil succeeds in making you complain, he has started on his victory road in your life? Before sickness came, before disease came, sorrow came. If the devil cannot stop you giving thanks to God, he cannot succeed. The purpose of the devil is to make you curse God and die. And so the bigger missiles he throws at you and if one of the missiles hits you, just turn around and say, "Thank You Lord, I can look around. Thank You Lord I am alive." Some of you may have lost everything in your life. You may have lost your home, your business, and your finances. You may be so deep in depth like a bottomless pit, nevertheless give thanks that you are still alive. In spite of everything, you are still alive. And as long as there is life there is hope. Where there is hope there can be faith. Where there can be faith the mountain can move. But it starts with giving thanks. First area is giving thanks in everything. In every circumstance, you find something to give thanks to God.

## **2. Give Thanks for People**

The second area can be a little bit difficult. But Paul does it all the time. In every first chapter of his epistles, he always starts with giving thanks for. There are some things you give thanks *in*. There are some things you give thanks *for*. In Rom. 1:8 *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you.* Thanking God for people. Giving thanks to God in every circumstance. In his first letter to the Corinthians, I want you to know that when Paul was writing this epistle he was actually very

upset. He was in tears and he was disappointed because the Corinthians had gone slightly astray. But yet Paul said in I Cor. 1: 4 *I give thanks to God always for you.* Do you know sometimes it's very difficult to give thanks to God for people? We can give thanks to God in everything. But we can't give thanks to God for people. And I find it in every epistle. But look at the first chapter of every epistle of Paul you find him mentioning that he gives thanks to God for the people he is writing to. Some of these people are actually causing much sorrow and heartache to him. Like the Galatians who were falling away and Paul says, "I travail for you." And yet he gave thanks to God for them.

One of the little secrets about the ministry of God is that many people in the ministry get burnt out. Many pastors I know get burnt out, worried and cast down. And many of them are not able to give thanks to God for their own churches, for their congregation, for their sheep. For some of them who are really burnt out look at their sheep and they are tired of it. These pastors forgot the little secret about the presence of God - give thanks for the people. You mean that long horned sheep? Yes, give thanks for people. You mean that curly sheep with that extra long hair? Yes, give thanks to God for those people. How can Paul give thanks to God for some of the most difficult people? Lets say you are apostle Tan Ah Kow. *And you write, Tan Ah Kow an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ I am disappointed in you. You backslidden, how can you dishonor me?* It would have been an attitude of not giving thanks. But the first thing Paul did when he looked at the Corinthians was he wept, he cried and he said, "I thank God for you." He looks at the Galatians and says, "I thank God for you." He looked at the Romans whom he has never really met before and he said, "I thank God for you."

Let me emphasize this fact a lot of Christians can thank God in every thing but they can't thank God for the people around them. They can't find good things in the people because different people have different gifts and different strength. Let's take for example, the crows. They say that the crow is a very selfish bird. Do you know that selfishness is the opposite of caring. The crow cared so much for his own that it becomes selfishly caring. I want you to know that crows can be the most generous bird. I have done a little reading about crows. And surprisingly crows are also the most generous bird. Sometime ago in Israel there was a flock of crows who came and kept attacking a certain place because a little baby crow was inside. Until the little baby crow was let loose they kept attacking and sacrificing their lives. I am

giving this illustration to show you that every person's weak point is actually a strong point seen in reverse. All your strongest gifts can be potential dangers and can hurt people. But at the time the things that are hurting people in your life could be your strongest assets. And if you learn to give thanks to God for people, you can draw the best out of their lives.

Here is a little story about charitable behavior among animals. And it says even more remarkable was how a pet South African crow performed a rescue operation. According to the couple that owned it, this crow was on excellent terms with the puppy. One day this puppy disappeared and was not seen for several days. The couple noticed that the crow was not eating as usual. It would take some food, fly off, return again and fly off with more food. In the end they followed the crow, which led them to the puppy, which was trapped in a snare and for 6 days had been fed by the crow. The puppy was in perfect condition. So Elijah was not the first one fed by crows. And there are other documentations of crows taking care and feeding other animals. We have a bible story about Elijah being fed by crows. And yet we have thought that the crow is a selfish animal. If the selfishness is turned in a wrong way, then it becomes truly selfish. But when it's turned in a right way it's a selfishness that cares. That caring attitude will even cause the crows to sacrifice its life for those that he is taking care of. That's just a little story to show that things are not always what they look.

It is difficult to give thanks to God for people because you can't seem to find something to give thanks for. Why not ask God to show you. Sometimes we have a wrong image of crows. When you picture a lion almost the average person think about brave king of the beasts. Let me tell you what my research shows. Lions especially the king lion, the male lions are the laziest of all animals. Now that doesn't refer to Jesus Lion of Judah. I am just trying to show how our pre-conceptions can be wrong. I read to you from the animal book. It says here in the section on lions. It may seem anthropomorphic to accuse the lion of being lazy. But there is really no better way to describe their life style. Look at it some of us exalt some people like heroes, yet others think they are like crows. We have a superficial impression of people based on what we see and know. And we don't know that behind the scene they may have been feeding the little puppy for 6 days who could have died if it wasn't for them. However to some people's minds certain personalities are like noble lions who deserve respect. But we don't know the

reason why they look so proper is because they have been sleeping all the time. The other guy may have been working for 20 hours and sleeping for 4 hours. Whereas the other guy sleeping for 20 hours and working for 4 hours. It says the lion is among the laziest especially the male of its species. Male lions if given the choice they will sleep for up to 20 hours out of every 24 hours depending on females to do all the work of securing food and raising the young. If a male lion awakes from his nap with a big appetite and there is no readily available food it will sometimes devour one of his own cubs rather than expand his effort to go and search for more legitimate food.

I just give a little bit of research to show you how first impression can be wrong. First impression of a crow bird is not a lovely looking bird. But the first impression of a lion when it comes up is to say, "Don't disturb him." But you didn't know he has been sleeping for 20 hours. I bring animals stories to illustrate how first impression can be wrong. I will guarantee you that there is some good that we will find in everyone. That there is something that is precious in every life. Even some of the people you despised and you don't like, when you begin to go into their life you may find something that touch you. Provided we are willing to give thanks for people. Pastors give thanks to God for the congregation you minister to.

Do you now that some of the people in the bible whom we put up as heroes, if you really walk close with them you may not like them. Lets say its Paul. Paul is a very strict man. He may scold you. He may loose his temper. He is a little bit like Noel Hayes or a disciplinarian person. He will think nothing of scolding you and hurting your feelings. He will come to you and say, "Sit up properly this is the house of God." And then he continues preaching some of his most beautiful sermon, love is kind, love is patient etc. But in the natural, he is a disciplinarian. You may think about Moses. And you think that he is the meekest man on the earth. Wait until he looses his temper.

As I say all things have to be balanced. When you see somebody who is extra meek, it may be because somewhere in another corner he has let out all his steam. That's why he has no more steam left. I pray God that its won't be some poor little wife that gets all the steam. Then in front of people, he is meek. He can afford to do that because all his steam has gone out at home. When he gets home he overturns the

tables and demands, "Where is my supper?" He lets out all his steam. No wonder by the time he comes out he is like a mouse.

I believe in balance. It is the same way with some people's spiritual life. Some people are so hyper-spiritual that they don't know how to plan their life. They don't keep bank accounts. When offerings come to them they say, "Thank you, God provides." And they go for expensive food, hotels and holidays. They don't do natural things properly. Of course, you have the opposite who are so natural that they don't expect miracles from God. There are all kinds of people in this world. Sometimes God put the people the hardest to thank God for in your life. Some of you speak of some difficult people in your lives as a thorn in the flesh. In the bible, a thorn in the flesh in the New Testament refers to Satanic forces. But sometimes the opposites are the most difficult situations and people you deal with draw the best out of us. We need to understand that every one has their gift.

The first thing we learn in everything give thanks. The second thing is for everyone give thanks. If there is one little individual in your life whom you know by name whom you never could give thanks for then you have unforgiveness in your heart for him. Until we can give thanks for everyone there will be no release in your life of the presence of God.

### **3. Give Thanks on Behalf of Things God has Done**

The third area of giving thanks found in Ephesians 5:19 *Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody unto the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus to God the Father.* The humble people are people who can give thanks for the smallest thing. If you don't believe me try this. Learn how to be thankful and give God for everything. It gives you a very humble feeling. One of the keys to walking in humility, which is an important key because Jesus walked in humility, is to walk thankfully. To thank God for people, keep thanking God and it will preserve humility in your life and prevent pride from coming in. Paul here talks about submission which is easy when its giving thanks. People who are thankful are

people who are submissive. People who are not submissive are people who are not thankful.

I can draw incidences from the bible not just from animal stories. As I look at Adam and Eve when they were first created, if they had been thankful for what God gave they may not have fallen. But they were looking at that one tree. God says all the trees in the garden are yours except one. And of all the many things, they must look at that one tree and be tempted. There were many other trees they had not tried out. They were not thankful for what is there. But they were complaining of what they don't have. If we were to focus not on what we don't have but focus on what we have and give thanks to God for that, we would have more. If we were to focus on what we don't have and complain on what we don't have, we may even lose what we have. This is what Adam and Eve lost.

Why were Cain and Abel in a bad relationship and why did Cain kill Abel? Because Cain was not thankful to God for whatever he was doing. If he had a thankful attitude and said, "Thank you Lord for teaching me. I am sorry Lord you didn't accept my sacrifice but thank you Lord for accepting Abel's sacrifice. Thank you God for Abel." How can you thank God for someone and still kill him? If he thanked God for Abel then he would be opened to Abel helping his life. The secret of not losing your temper is to thank God for people. Husband when you are losing your temper against your wife, look at your wife and say, "Thank God for my wife." And when you began to thank God for your wife and think about the good things she has done, there will be no more temper left to lose. Thank God in the daily circumstances of life.

Now here in Ephesians 5 Paul gives a slightly different angle. He says giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. What he means is thanking God on behalf of all things in Him. The word to could be translated in God. And that is the third area of thanksgiving. Now this third area of thanksgiving is a kind of thanksgiving that we do in our church. Maybe you have a project and your project is completed successfully. You have your blessing. And you end up with thanksgiving on behalf of those things that God has done. There are 3 levels of thanksgiving. The first is in everything give thanks. The second is for everyone give thanks. The third is on behalf of the things that God has done we

give thanks to God. And that will create a greater joy and opportunity for God to work in our life. Begin to change your attitude in life. Begin to give thanks to God for all that He has done. And every time He does something and we give thanks, it stirs the Father heart of God to do more for our lives.

#### **4. Faith Thanksgiving**

Having looked at those three areas here is another fourth area that is very powerful in thanksgiving. I call it faith thanksgiving. Faith thanksgiving is a thanksgiving that is saying what God says about the circumstances. The word thanksgiving comes from the Greek word *eucharisteo* it is from two words. From the word *charis* which means the grace of God and from the word *eu* which means good. So the word *eucharisteo* has been talking about good grace. Which is why we are sharing here part of the key or the secret of practicing the presence of God is giving thanks. Because when you give thanks you are drawing on the grace of God to fill you with His goodness. The word thanksgiving means good grace. And every time you give thanks you draw the grace of God and the presence of God into your life. And there is an aspect where you learn how to move in that even further.

There is another word translated thanksgiving in the Greek. Look at Lk.2:38 *And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.* The word give thanks is the word *homologeo*, which means to say the same thing. I could translate it that when she came she said the same thing to God. Then in Heb. 13:15 *Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge (giving thanks to) His name.* Now the word giving thanks in Heb.13:15 is the word *homologeo*. Offer a sacrifice of praise to God that is the fruit of our lips saying the same thing in His name. What he means here is to agree with God. To say what God says about the situation. And you do it by giving thanks, by faith.

Now how does that faith operate? Turn to Ephesians one. I like to show something here. In Christ everything has been done. It is not future tense; it is past tense. In the wonderful spiritual way it has been done. And one of the things that have been

done is that we are already seated at the heavenly places in Christ. When you begin to receive this revelation you pray differently. Normally you pray O God save my family. You know what the bible says. In II Cor. 5 God has already by faith saved the world. I don't mean that if they don't turn to Jesus that they will go to heaven. But it does mean that the message is no different. The message is not a message of condemnation.

Turn to II Cor. 5:18 *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.* Or the word of reconciliation. So when you get this revelation if you are down here you would be praying O God save the world. But when you enter into that realm you will be seeing that it is done, it has been done, the world is saved in Christ. And you will be praying O God show the world, open the eyes of the people of the world that they may see that they have been saved in Christ. And your prayers will be more powerful. They will reach out and save your family faster than any other way. When you pray according to the bible is different. When they got the revelation, they will pray O God open the eyes of my family that they may know that Jesus died for their sins. And that is scriptural praying that their eyes could be opened. It's a different way of praying, a different approach to your life. In the same way everything you need is already in Christ. When you have the revelation that is in Him and you believe that is done, your prayer and your walk is different.

Look at Eph. 1:17 *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power in us who believe.* Now up to that time do you know that he has not asked God for anything new in their lives except a greater measure of the Holy Spirit? All he is asking for is that we the church would have our eyes opened that we may know what is already there. It is not for God to send it, not for God to do it, but for us to realize it. Like I said the presence of God is here all the time, there is enough power to heal any blind person, any sick person if you can get a revelation of that. You acknowledge that it is there first, the presence then you thank God for that.

Fourth area is faith thanksgiving and you will see that presence beginning to rise up according to your faith level. But when you don't see it as there all your crying will not work. To strengthen that point look at verse 19 Do you notice it says, "What is the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe."? We have always looked at the words *towards us who believe* to those who believe that Jesus is our Savior. Not so, in the Greek it actually sounds this way. He prayed that the eyes of your understanding be enlightened that you may know what is the hope of your calling. That is No. 1. No. 2 what are the riches of His glory of His inheritance. His glory, His riches are already there. It's for us to see it. Except we don't see it therefore it's not ours. So Paul prayed, "O God give them the Holy Spirit in a greater measure so that their eyes can be opened." In fact the Holy Spirit didn't give you anything. The Holy Spirit only came to open your eyes to help you see what is already there for you in Christ. The Holy Spirit comes to show you that the riches of His inheritance in Christ Jesus is there is for you to see it. The hope of His calling for us to see it and the exceeding greatness of His power towards us, those who believe according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ Jesus when He raised Him from the dead. In a sense he is saying that this work for those who believe that they are raised in Jesus Christ and seated at the right hand of God. There are a lot of believers who don't believe that. They don't believe that they could be seated with Jesus.

Some people don't understand how can anyone sit on Christ's throne. My only answer is, "Haven't they read the bible? Haven't they read Ephesians?" What do they mean by seated at the right hand of God. Don't forget there are 4 to 5 billion people on this earth. Maybe there are about a billion Christians today and in the past generations of 2000 years of the church age. How many Christians are there already in Christ? Don't tell me there are one billion thrones at the right hand of God. There is only one throne. We are seated with Him. But not every believer can see that. They can't see that they are with Him and in Him. And we need to see that we are there. Once we see that we are there we believe that we are there you *homologeo* and you agree with God that is done and you give thanks to God. When you give thanks to God it releases a powerful force to work in your life.

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The second key to practicing the presence of God is called the Spirit of thanksgiving. One of the most important truths that is simple and yet easily forgotten and practiced is the key of thanksgiving. Every time we take ourselves away into our worries and our anxieties we began to lose the presence of God. But every time you began to thank God, the presence of God began to build upon your life all over again. I would to challenge you at any time in your life when you don't feel the presence of God any more; when the worries of this life and the day to day activities cloud your mind and your memory all you have to do is pull yourself back for a moment and begin to give thanks. Begin to thank God for your life, thank God for the sunshine, thank God for the day, thank God for your friends, thank God for His blessings, thank God for your good health and every time you begin to thank God the presence of God builds up.

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Philippians 4:6-7 *Have no anxiety about everything, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* The peace of God will guard your heart and your mind. The word *guard* is the Greek word for *garrison* like a fortress to prevent any anxiety and any worry and any fear from coming in provided you give thanks. Give thanks for the little things for the big things in every thing give thanks to God.

In the book of Acts 16, we see a tremendous revival and a great move of the Holy Spirit. Paul was in prison and for a moment, it looks like his missionary journey was not working. He obeyed the Macedonian call, went to Philippi, preached the gospel, cast out devils and got into prison. Things were not working out fine. Maybe your life is like the life of the apostle Paul. You have obeyed your vision. Maybe some of you called to the ministry had gone into the ministry obeying the Macedonian call. Maybe some of you in the business world have obeyed the dream that God has placed in your life and you launch into the dream. And as you have launched forth, you did what you know was right. Of course, demonic forces come against you like Paul had. At first, there was no result, or maybe some small little result. And then the worst thing came. When you began to glorify the name of Jesus, worst things happened to you.

When Paul began to cast out the devil in Jesus name he said, "I adjure you, in the name of Jesus, come out." And the demon came out from the little girl. And he got himself into prison. It would be the easiest thing to say "Why Lord?" It would have been the easiest thing to say, "God I give up. The moment I get out of this prison I am not going to do your will any more." It would have been the easiest thing to say and complain to God. It would have been the easiest thing to blame God. But Paul and Silas at midnight with their back bruised and bleeding from the whipping they received, not understanding how things are going to work out, what can you do? Give thanks. In your problem, in your situation gives thanks and the peace of God will come. "Thank God we are alive. Thank God, we are not dead. Thank God that I am not sick. Thank God that I have done God's will." When they gave thanks, the presence of God started coming. It was a spiritual earthquake that came into that place and the whole place was turned upside down. The chains were broken and Paul was loosed at midnight.

Give thanks in your circumstances. It is a skill that we must be reminded constantly. Give thanks and don't worry. Many times, we tell people not to worry. It would be better for you to say, "Don't worry; give thanks." Immediately when you give thanks, your worries will be gone. That's the secret of God working in your life. What do you feel like when somebody stabs you at the back? You wouldn't feel like giving thanks. Remember this all the testing, the trials, the problems, the mountains

and the darts of the devil thrown against you have only two objectives. No. 1 to steal the Word of God out of your life or the revelation that God has given you. That will be your future. No. 2 to steal the presence of God from your life. And if the devil cannot steal your joy, he cannot steal your strength. And if you choose by act of the will to give thanks, you retain the presence of God. Do you know that if the devil have not made you sick or have not destroyed you yet, but if the devil succeeds in making you complain, he has started on his victory road in your life? Before sickness came, before disease came, sorrow came. If the devil cannot stop you giving thanks to God, he cannot succeed. The purpose of the devil is to make you curse God and die. And so the bigger missiles he throws at you and if one of the missiles hits you, just turn around and say, "Thank You Lord, I can look around. Thank You Lord I am alive." Some of you may have lost everything in your life. You may have lost your home, your business, and your finances. You may be so deep in depth like a bottomless pit, nevertheless give thanks that you are still alive. In spite of everything, you are still alive. And as long as there is life there is hope. Where there is hope there can be faith. Where there can be faith the mountain can move. But it starts with giving thanks. First area is giving thanks in everything. In every circumstance, you find something to give thanks to God.

## **2. Give Thanks for People**

The second area can be a little bit difficult. But Paul does it all the time. In every first chapter of his epistles, he always starts with giving thanks for. There are some things you give thanks *in*. There are some things you give thanks *for*. In Rom. 1:8 *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you.* Thanking God for people. Giving thanks to God in every circumstance. In his first letter to the Corinthians, I want you to know that when Paul was writing this epistle he was actually very upset. He was in tears and he was disappointed because the Corinthians had gone slightly astray. But yet Paul said in I Cor. 1: 4 *I give thanks to God always for you.* Do you know sometimes it's very difficult to give thanks to God for people? We can give thanks to God in everything. But we can't give thanks to God for people. And I find it in every epistle. But look at the first chapter of every epistle of Paul you find him mentioning that he gives thanks to God for the people he is writing to. Some of these people are actually causing much sorrow and heartache to him. Like the Galatians who were falling away and Paul says, "I travail for you." And yet he gave thanks to God for them.

One of the little secrets about the ministry of God is that many people in the ministry get burnt out. Many pastors I know get burnt out, worried and cast down. And many of them are not able to give thanks to God for their own churches, for their congregation, for their sheep. For some of them who are really burnt out look at their sheep and they are tired of it. These pastors forgot the little secret about the presence of God - give thanks for the people. You mean that long horned sheep? Yes, give thanks for people. You mean that curly sheep with that extra long hair? Yes, give thanks to God for those people. How can Paul give thanks to God for some of the most difficult people? Lets say you are apostle Tan Ah Kow. *And you write, Tan Ah Kow an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ I am disappointed in you. You backslidden, how can you dishonor me?* It would have been an attitude of not giving thanks. But the first thing Paul did when he looked at the Corinthians was he wept, he cried and he said, "I thank God for you." He looks at the Galatians and says, "I thank God for you." He looked at the Romans whom he has never really met before and he said, "I thank God for you."

Let me emphasize this fact a lot of Christians can thank God in every thing but they can't thank God for the people around them. They can't find good things in the people because different people have different gifts and different strength. Let's take for example, the crows. They say that the crow is a very selfish bird. Do you know that selfishness is the opposite of caring. The crow cared so much for his own that it becomes selfishly caring. I want you to know that crows can be the most generous bird. I have done a little reading about crows. And surprisingly crows are also the most generous bird. Sometime ago in Israel there was a flock of crows who came and kept attacking a certain place because a little baby crow was inside. Until the little baby crow was let loose they kept attacking and sacrificing their lives. I am giving this illustration to show you that every person's weak point is actually a strong point seen in reverse. All your strongest gifts can be potential dangers and can hurt people. But at the time the things that are hurting people in your life could be your strongest assets. And if you learn to give thanks to God for people, you can draw the best out of their lives.

Here is a little story about charitable behavior among animals. And it says even more remarkable was how a pet South African crow performed a rescue operation.

According to the couple that owned it, this crow was on excellent terms with the puppy. One day this puppy disappeared and was not seen for several days. The couple noticed that the crow was not eating as usual. It would take some food, fly off, return again and fly off with more food. In the end they followed the crow, which led them to the puppy, which was trapped in a snare and for 6 days had been fed by the crow. The puppy was in perfect condition. So Elijah was not the first one fed by crows. And there are other documentations of crows taking care and feeding other animals. We have a bible story about Elijah being fed by crows. And yet we have thought that the crow is a selfish animal. If the selfishness is turned in a wrong way, then it becomes truly selfish. But when it's turned in a right way it's a selfishness that cares. That caring attitude will even cause the crows to sacrifice its life for those that he is taking care of. That's just a little story to show that things are not always what they look.

It is difficult to give thanks to God for people because you can't seem to find something to give thanks for. Why not ask God to show you. Sometimes we have a wrong image of crows. When you picture a lion almost the average person think about brave king of the beasts. Let me tell you what my research shows. Lions especially the king lion, the male lions are the laziest of all animals. Now that doesn't refer to Jesus Lion of Judah. I am just trying to show how our pre-conceptions can be wrong. I read to you from the animal book. It says here in the section on lions. It may seem anthropomorphic to accuse the lion of being lazy. But there is really no better way to describe their life style. Look at it some of us exalt some people like heroes, yet others think they are like crows. We have a superficial impression of people based on what we see and know. And we don't know that behind the scene they may have been feeding the little puppy for 6 days who could have died if it wasn't for them. However to some people's minds certain personalities are like noble lions who deserve respect. But we don't know the reason why they look so proper is because they have been sleeping all the time. The other guy may have been working for 20 hours and sleeping for 4 hours. Whereas the other guy sleeping for 20 hours and working for 4 hours. It says the lion is among the laziest especially the male of its species. Male lions if given the choice they will sleep for up to 20 hours out of every 24 hours depending on females to do all the work of securing food and raising the young. If a male lion awakes from his nap with a big appetite and there is no readily available food it will sometimes devour one of his own cubs rather than expand his effort to go and search for more legitimate food.

I just give a little bit of research to show you how first impression can be wrong. First impression of a crow bird is not a lovely looking bird. But the first impression of a lion when it comes up is to say, "Don't disturb him." But you didn't know he has been sleeping for 20 hours. I bring animals stories to illustrate how first impression can be wrong. I will guarantee you that there is some good that we will find in everyone. That there is something that is precious in every life. Even some of the people you despised and you don't like, when you begin to go into their life you may find something that touch you. Provided we are willing to give thanks for people. Pastors give thanks to God for the congregation you minister to.

Do you now that some of the people in the bible whom we put up as heroes, if you really walk close with them you may not like them. Lets say its Paul. Paul is a very strict man. He may scold you. He may loose his temper. He is a little bit like Noel Hayes or a disciplinarian person. He will think nothing of scolding you and hurting your feelings. He will come to you and say, "Sit up properly this is the house of God." And then he continues preaching some of his most beautiful sermon, love is kind, love is patient etc. But in the natural, he is a disciplinarian. You may think about Moses. And you think that he is the meekest man on the earth. Wait until he looses his temper.

As I say all things have to be balanced. When you see somebody who is extra meek, it may be because somewhere in another corner he has let out all his steam. That's why he has no more steam left. I pray God that its won't be some poor little wife that gets all the steam. Then in front of people, he is meek. He can afford to do that because all his steam has gone out at home. When he gets home he overturns the tables and demands, "Where is my supper?" He lets out all his steam. No wonder by the time he comes out he is like a mouse.

I believe in balance. It is the same way with some people's spiritual life. Some people are so hyper-spiritual that they don't know how to plan their life. They don't keep bank accounts. When offerings come to them they say, "Thank you, God provides." And they go for expensive food, hotels and holidays. They don't do natural things properly. Of course, you have the opposite who are so natural that

they don't expect miracles from God. There are all kinds of people in this world. Sometimes God put the people the hardest to thank God for in your life. Some of you speak of some difficult people in your lives as a thorn in the flesh. In the bible, a thorn in the flesh in the New Testament refers to Satanic forces. But sometimes the opposites are the most difficult situations and people you deal with draw the best out of us. We need to understand that every one has their gift.

The first thing we learn in everything give thanks. The second thing is for everyone give thanks. If there is one little individual in your life whom you know by name whom you never could give thanks for then you have unforgiveness in your heart for him. Until we can give thanks for everyone there will be no release in your life of the presence of God.

### **3. Give Thanks on Behalf of Things God has Done**

The third area of giving thanks found in Ephesians 5:19 *Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody unto the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus to God the Father.* The humble people are people who can give thanks for the smallest thing. If you don't believe me try this. Learn how to be thankful and give God for everything. It gives you a very humble feeling. One of the keys to walking in humility, which is an important key because Jesus walked in humility, is to walk thankfully. To thank God for people, keep thanking God and it will preserve humility in your life and prevent pride from coming in. Paul here talks about submission which is easy when its giving thanks. People who are thankful are people who are submissive. People who are not submissive are people who are not thankful.

I can draw incidences from the bible not just from animal stories. As I look at Adam and Eve when they were first created, if they had been thankful for what God gave they may not have fallen. But they were looking at that one tree. God says all the trees in the garden are yours except one. And of all the many things, they must look at that one tree and be tempted. There were many other trees they had not tried

out. They were not thankful for what is there. But they were complaining of what they don't have. If we were to focus not on what we don't have but focus on what we have and give thanks to God for that, we would have more. If we were to focus on what we don't have and complain on what we don't have, we may even lose what we have. This is what Adam and Eve lost.

Why were Cain and Abel in a bad relationship and why did Cain kill Abel? Because Cain was not thankful to God for whatever he was doing. If he had a thankful attitude and said, "Thank you Lord for teaching me. I am sorry Lord you didn't accept my sacrifice but thank you Lord for accepting Abel's sacrifice. Thank you God for Abel." How can you thank God for someone and still kill him? If he thanked God for Abel then he would be opened to Abel helping his life. The secret of not losing your temper is to thank God for people. Husband when you are losing your temper against your wife, look at your wife and say, "Thank God for my wife." And when you began to thank God for your wife and think about the good things she has done, there will be no more temper left to lose. Thank God in the daily circumstances of life.

Now here in Ephesians 5 Paul gives a slightly different angle. He says giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. What he means is thanking God on behalf of all things in Him. The word to could be translated in God. And that is the third area of thanksgiving. Now this third area of thanksgiving is a kind of thanksgiving that we do in our church. Maybe you have a project and your project is completed successfully. You have your blessing. And you end up with thanksgiving on behalf of those things that God has done. There are 3 levels of thanksgiving. The first is in everything give thanks. The second is for everyone give thanks. The third is on behalf of the things that God has done we give thanks to God. And that will create a greater joy and opportunity for God to work in our life. Begin to change your attitude in life. Begin to give thanks to God for all that He has done. And every time He does something and we give thanks, it stirs the Father heart of God to do more for our lives.

#### **4. Faith Thanksgiving**

Having looked at those three areas here is another fourth area that is very powerful in thanksgiving. I call it faith thanksgiving. Faith thanksgiving is a thanksgiving that is saying what God says about the circumstances. The word thanksgiving comes from the Greek word *eucharisteo* it is from two words. From the word *charis* which means the grace of God and from the word *eu* which means good. So the word *eucharisteo* has been talking about good grace. Which is why we are sharing here part of the key or the secret of practicing the presence of God is giving thanks. Because when you give thanks you are drawing on the grace of God to fill you with His goodness. The word thanksgiving means good grace. And every time you give thanks you draw the grace of God and the presence of God into your life. And there is an aspect where you learn how to move in that even further.

There is another word translated thanksgiving in the Greek. Look at Lk.2:38 *And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.* The word give thanks is the word *homologeo*, which means to say the same thing. I could translate it that when she came she said the same thing to God. Then in Heb. 13:15 *Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge (giving thanks to) His name.* Now the word giving thanks in Heb.13:15 is the word *homologeo*. Offer a sacrifice of praise to God that is the fruit of our lips saying the same thing in His name. What he means here is to agree with God. To say what God says about the situation. And you do it by giving thanks, by faith.

Now how does that faith operate? Turn to Ephesians one. I like to show something here. In Christ everything has been done. It is not future tense; it is past tense. In the wonderful spiritual way it has been done. And one of the things that have been done is that we are already seated at the heavenly places in Christ. When you begin to receive this revelation you pray differently. Normally you pray O God save my family. You know what the bible says. In II Cor. 5 God has already by faith saved the world. I don't mean that if they don't turn to Jesus that they will go to heaven. But it does mean that the message is no different. The message is not a message of condemnation.

Turn to II Cor. 5:18 *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciling the world to*

*Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.* Or the word of reconciliation. So when you get this revelation if you are down here you would be praying O God save the world. But when you enter into that realm you will be seeing that it is done, it has been done, the world is saved in Christ. And you will be praying O God show the world, open the eyes of the people of the world that they may see that they have been saved in Christ. And your prayers will be more powerful. They will reach out and save your family faster than any other way. When you pray according to the bible is different. When they got the revelation, they will pray O God open the eyes of my family that they may know that Jesus died for their sins. And that is scriptural praying that their eyes could be opened. It's a different way of praying, a different approach to your life. In the same way everything you need is already in Christ. When you have the revelation that is in Him and you believe that is done, your prayer and your walk is different.

Look at Eph. 1:17 *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power in us who believe.* Now up to that time do you know that he has not asked God for anything new in their lives except a greater measure of the Holy Spirit? All he is asking for is that we the church would have our eyes opened that we may know what is already there. It is not for God to send it, not for God to do it, but for us to realize it. Like I said the presence of God is here all the time, there is enough power to heal any blind person, any sick person if you can get a revelation of that. You acknowledge that it is there first, the presence then you thank God for that.

Fourth area is faith thanksgiving and you will see that presence beginning to rise up according to your faith level. But when you don't see it as there all your crying will not work. To strengthen that point look at verse 19 Do you notice it says, "What is the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe."? We have always looked at the words *towards us who believe* to those who believe that Jesus is our Savior. Not so, in the Greek it actually sounds this way. He prayed that the eyes of your understanding be enlightened that you may know what is the hope of your calling. That is No. 1. No. 2 what are the riches of His glory of His inheritance. His glory, His riches are already there. It's for us to see it. Except we don't see it

therefore it's not ours. So Paul prayed, "O God give them the Holy Spirit in a greater measure so that their eyes can be opened." In fact the Holy Spirit didn't give you anything. The Holy Spirit only came to open your eyes to help you see what is already there for you in Christ. The Holy Spirit comes to show you that the riches of His inheritance in Christ Jesus is there is for you to see it. The hope of His calling for us to see it and the exceeding greatness of His power towards us, those who believe according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ Jesus when He raised Him from the dead. In a sense he is saying that this work for those who believe that they are raised in Jesus Christ and seated at the right hand of God. There are a lot of believers who don't believe that. They don't believe that they could be seated with Jesus.

Some people don't understand how anyone can sit on Christ's throne. My only answer is, "Haven't they read the bible? Haven't they read Ephesians?" What do they mean by seated at the right hand of God. Don't forget there are 4 to 5 billion people on this earth. Maybe there are about a billion Christians today and in the past generations of 2000 years of the church age. How many Christians are there already in Christ? Don't tell me there are one billion thrones at the right hand of God. There is only one throne. We are seated with Him. But not every believer can see that. They can't see that they are with Him and in Him. And we need to see that we are there. Once we see that we are there we believe that we are there you *homologeo* and you agree with God that is done and you give thanks to God. When you give thanks to God it releases a powerful force to work in your life.