

*Thanks,
Giving Thanks*

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Thanks, Giving Thanks

Murray Wylie - Brisbane Christian Fellowship

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Thanks, Giving Thanks

Congregational Chorus
by Murray Wylie

August 2009

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Thanks, Giving Thanks

Thanks, giving thanks to the Father of our Lord
Thanks, giving thanks for His mercies ever sure
Our Shepherd, who brought us by blood from the dead
Is making us complete in every work prepared.
Grace has spread through many, many sons
With gifts abounding, received by every one
So now in peace confessing, His offering once for all
Our thanks are now abounding, and our joy is full.
Giving glory, giving glory, giving glory to God.

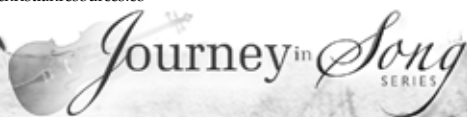
Introduction

The aim of the 'Journey in Song' series is multi-layered. First of all, the landmarks of my own journey and that of the Fellowship to which I belong, can be testified through various original songs and hymns, and these will be introduced throughout the series. Second, our current journey is also marked by new songs that are being written from week to week, and these are introduced in the series as well. And, finally, the foremost aim is that readers may be able to connect their own journey to the content of the new songs.

Thanksgiving

In the case of this current booklet, the theme of 'thanksgiving' is far-reaching. Of course, thanksgiving is central to all our praise and worship. However, I'd like to expand the theme to areas that we may not have previously considered. For example, it is important that we link thanks with a study of the peace offering, in both Old and New Testaments. The peace offering was a thanksgiving offering, associated with a successful harvest at the end of a season. Lev 7:13. It's not hard to see immediately that thanksgiving is the mode in which we return to the Lord, and offer the fruit of His grace back to Him.

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Now let's note a couple of the Scripture verses that form the background of the song, 'Thanks Giving Thanks'. 'Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Eph 5:20.

'For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.' 2 Cor 4:15.

Frequently in the Scriptures, 'thanks' is rendered to God the Father. This is because in the unfolding of God's purpose, the Father is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Col 1:3. Although the fullness of grace and blessing is available to us in Christ, our thanks is returned through Christ to the Father, thus completing the cycle. So we do 'everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father'. Col 3:17.

The verse in 2 Corinthians quoted above is of particular interest to us. There we read that as grace spreads through the 'many', thanksgiving abounds to the glory of God. This is the keynote direction of the song, as we see in the lyrics: 'Grace has spread through many, many sons ... [and then the last line] ... giving glory to God'. Grace spreads out, then thanksgiving is returned. This is the primary thought behind the song.

Gifts abounding through many

The song reads, 'Grace has spread ... with gifts abounding received by everyone'.

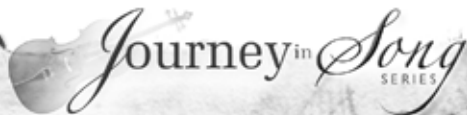
This leads us to another important verse, 'You also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many'. 2 Cor 1:11.

So we see the central point becoming evident. Grace spreads out to many, gifts abound, then thanks is returned. Let us see how this is reflected in the above verse. Paul is acknowledging that many had been helping in prayer. He also says that a gift (Gr. charisma, spiritual gift) had been granted 'through many'. In all then, many would have cause to give thanks because of the outflow of fruitful grace.

This may all appear to be fairly straightforward. However, this is no small thing that is happening. A very rich dimension of participation is being described here, and this is what our theme song is celebrating. Paul is alluding to a profound participation in offering, in fact a participation in the sufferings of Christ, in His offering. In this way, grace is spreading out, and thanks is being returned.

What is the circumstance in which Paul has received a 'gift' through many? It is a situation in which he has been burdened

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Thanks, Giving Thanks

MLC

Murray Wylie

Allegro (♩ = c.140)

F **C7**
G

F **Am7** **Bb** **C11** **F** **C7**
A

mf Thanks, giv-ing thanks__ to the Fath - er of__ our Lord__

5 **F** **C7** **F** **Am7** **Bb** **Gm7** **C7sus** **C7**
G **A**

Thanks, giv-ing thanks__ for His mer - cies ev - er sure__ Our

9 **Dm** **C** **F7** **Bb**
E

Shep - herd__ Who brought us__ by blood from the dead__

13 **F** **C7** **F** **Bb** **C7sus** **C7**
C **Bb** **A**

Is__ mak-ing us com-plete__ in ev - 'ry work__ pre-pared

17 **F** **C7** **F** **Am** **Bb**
G **A**

Grace has spread through ma - ny ma - ny sons

MLC

21 C^7sus C^7 F $\frac{C^7}{G}$ $\frac{F}{A}$ Am B^b

— With gifts a - bound - ing re - ceived by ev - 'ry one

25 C^7sus C^7 Dm $\frac{C}{E}$ F^7

— So now in peace con - fess - ing His off - ring once for all

29 B^b $\frac{F}{C}$ $\frac{C^7}{B^b}$ $\frac{F}{A}$ B^b

— Our thanks are now a - bound - ing, and our joy

(If no choir use descant)

33 C^7sus C^7 F $Fsus$ F Dm C $\frac{C^7}{B^b}$

— is full Giv - ing glor - y Giv - ing

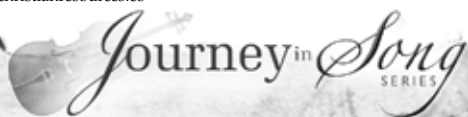
37 $\frac{F}{A}$ $\frac{F^7}{E^b}$ $\frac{B^b}{D}$ $\frac{B^b m}{D^b}$ $\frac{F}{C}$ B^b C^7sus C^7

glor - y to God
glor - y to God

B^b $\frac{F}{A}$ Gm^7 F B^b $\frac{F}{A}$ Gm^7 F

1. Last time. rit.
Giv - ing

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above measure, and has even despaired of life itself. 2 Cor 1:8ff. In response to Paul, 'many persons' have become fellow partakers with him, through prayer, in his intense suffering. He is sharing in the sufferings of Christ, and not for his own sake. Col 1:24. The prayer of others has been more than just concerned entreaties. It has become a genuine part of this entire offering. Their prayer has connected them to the grace of Christ that is flowing through His body in various gifts. Their prayer has even produced a gift through which Paul has obviously found help. Now the many who have become involved will all be able to give thanks. Grace has been multiplied, through participation in offering, and now a peace offering of thanksgiving can be returned to the Lord.

Grace and peace

Grace and peace are both involved here, as in the verse, 'Grace to you and peace be multiplied'. 1 Peter 1:2. There are other similar references. 2 Peter 1:2; Phile 3. We could say that the source of God's giving is grace, and the result of it is peace, once the grace has been multiplied to the intended outcomes. When grace is multiplied through 'many, many sons', as the song proclaims, peace is multiplied as well. We recall that peace is associated with thanksgiving. It's as if a particular season of sowing, testing and growing comes to an end, and so resounds with thanksgiving.

The Old Testament offerings

Our understanding is greatly enriched if we refer to the five Old Testament offerings which formed the basis of Israel's tabernacle service. The burnt, grain, sin, trespass and peace offerings are discussed in the early chapters of Leviticus. For now, our focus is on the peace offering, which was offered in thanksgiving. Lev 7:13. In particular, the fat of the peace offering (lamb or goat) was burned as a sweet incense. Lev 6:12. Thanksgiving, associated with the peace offering, is the 'fat' that is burned as a sweet aroma to the Lord. In other words, the overflow, the increase, 'the fruit of our lips', is 'a sacrifice of praise', just as we read, 'Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name'. Heb 13:15.

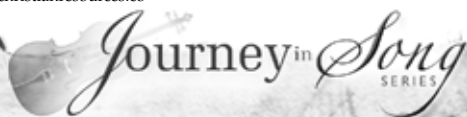
Note the aspects in this verse: offering, sacrifice, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks. This is a rich subject. Giving thanks is a sacrifice of praise. Thanks is the fruit that comes forth from an entire life of participation in priesthood.

Cycles of offerings

- therefore let us give thanks

When we read in the book of Hebrews, 'Therefore ... let us continually offer ...', we must look backwards from the word 'therefore' to see why it is used. Whether we retrace a few

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verses, or look back a few chapters, the picture is the same. There is a true temple, with an altar, in which we are to 'serve God acceptably', and in which we are participating with Christ. Heb 13:10; 12:28. As the apostle Peter says, we are a 'royal priesthood' functioning in a 'spiritual house', and we are offering 'spiritual sacrifices'. 1 Peter 2:5,9.

Whenever we read the word 'acceptable' in relation to offering, as in Hebrews 12:28 and Romans 12:1, we know it is associated with the burnt offering, the first of the five offerings. Isa 56:7. 'Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.' Lev 1:4. 'I beseech you ... that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.' Rom 12:1.

We remember the challenge to Cain, 'If you do well, will you not be accepted?' Gen 4:7. This was the first lesson in the Scriptures about offering. Acceptance! Making acceptable offerings.

There is much to learn here, but for the moment we are casting our eye between Hebrews 12:28 (acceptable, cf. burnt offering) and Hebrews 13:15 (giving thanks, cf. peace offering). We are considering why the writer says, 'Therefore let us give thanks'. Continuing in the terms of the 'altar' referred to in these Scriptures, we are exhorted to go forth to Him 'outside the camp, bearing His reproach'. Heb 13:10,13. As with this

whole study, the setting in these Scriptures is to do with the cycle of five offerings. Christ is pictured here as the sin offering who suffered 'outside the camp' in a way that was a parallel to the Old Testament practice of carrying the excess parts of the sacrifices outside the tabernacle for burning.

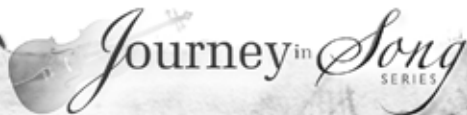
One offering - once for all

Our short study allows this one brief conclusion. The instructions to us are about participation in the five aspects of offering, all of which were fulfilled in Christ. He was the one complete offering, 'once for all'. Rom 6:10; Heb 9:12; 10:10.

In truth, we do not make separate and individual offerings, even when we are giving thanks. It may seem that way but, in fact, all our sacrifices and offerings are in response to, and are a participation in, His once for all offering. He is 'the volume of the book'. Heb 10:7. He is 'the offering of the body' once for all. Heb 10:10.

In practical terms then, a) when we are participating in the 'burnt offering', we are presenting our entire persons as living sacrifices. Lev 1; 6:8-13. This is where acceptable offering begins. b) When we are offering the firstfruits of our labours and resources, we are participating in the 'grain offering', and we are simply bringing forth the fruit of Christ's life and grace. Lev 2; 6:14-23. c) When we are dealing with sin, or d) with trespass, in ourselves, or restoring others in such matters,

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we are availing ourselves of Christ's offering 'once for all' in the aspects of the sin offering and the trespass offering. Lev 4-5; 6:24-7:10. And, finally, e) What is the result? The peace offering! The fruit of participation!

The meaning of giving thanks

So then, what does giving thanks really mean? Thanks is the indication that we have followed through with a particular commitment, a specific conviction, or with a matter needing attention and change in our lives. We have found peace! Thanksgiving is our peace offering.

What does the God of peace desire for our lives? He is delivering us from sin that leads to death, and bringing us back from the dead. Note the following verses from which the lines of the song are taken. 'Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will.' Heb 13:20,21.

Our song declares that He is 'making us complete in every work prepared'. What are the works prepared for us? The book of Ephesians notes that 'we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them'. Eph 2:10. Our works were prepared beforehand. What an amazing realisation! Now, as

His will is fulfilled in our lives, from day to day, week to week, season to season, despite our failures and sidetracks, we can give thanks.

Let's think of it this way. Giving thanks is an activity in which we stand up as fully accountable people, acknowledging what is being given to us. Returning thanks to the Lord completes the cycle of His giving, and there is peace. The God of peace is the One who will 'bruise Satan under our feet shortly'. Rom 16:20. He will bring things to peace. He is the God of all grace, and He is also the God of peace. When the grace provided is met by a faithful, obedient, triumphant response, then there is peace. Thanksgiving is a victory. Those who are born of God are constantly triumphing in this way.

Peace - thanksgiving - worship

Thanks brings peace, because the one giving and the one receiving are united in complete harmony. In fact, this is the basis of worship. Giving and receiving with thankfulness is a complete statement of worship (or shall we call it 'worship') one to the other. The worth, the honour, and the full respect of another, is expressed by the one who is giving, and also in the wholehearted response of the receiver to the giver. When the 'worth' expression of each meets the other, there is peace. There is worship.

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Parents may recall the importance they placed on teaching their children to be thankful. They may also recall how hurt (de-worthed) and devalued they felt when children were less than thankful, taking the travail of their parents for granted. Picture a child who is learning their own value and that of others, and learning to be responsive to the actions of giving that are being extended. Where that young person can be thankful, without understatement or overstatement, without awkward obligation, and without reaching to 'make it up' or pay it back in equal measure, there is a true meeting between receiver and giver. There is peace.

Thanks brings a union in one spirit – between the one giving, and the one receiving; between the one being valued, and the one being honoured in response. To thank the Lord is to be at peace. Thanks is a peace offering. God is offering us peace. Then, in full response, we are receiving His offer and offering to enter into that peace.

Thanksgiving - the basis of all worship

As the psalmist writes, we enter His gates with thanksgiving. Psa 100:4. This means that we are thankful for His blessing, and for His chastening, in our lives. A response of thanks indicates that we truly believe it is His offering that is working in our lives, in various aspects. At first, we may be all too conscious of how we are performing. We tend to think that if things aren't going well, we must have done something

wrong. So we feel self-conscious and exposed. But then we remember that we have died with Christ. We live no longer for ourselves. His life is now being revealed. If we truly believe this, we can do nothing but be at peace, and give thanks.

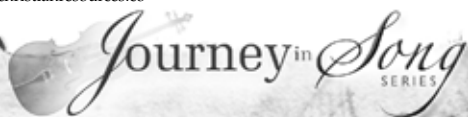
So, it's not difficult to see that if thanksgiving is not the absolute foundation of our worship, then we have not begun to worship at all. While we are resenting the state of things, while we are reasoning and bargaining within our minds, we are not giving thanks, and we have not begun to worship. If we aim to praise and worship Him in this condition, or while we are thankless and unresolved in relation to others, our words are empty and our hearts are insincere.

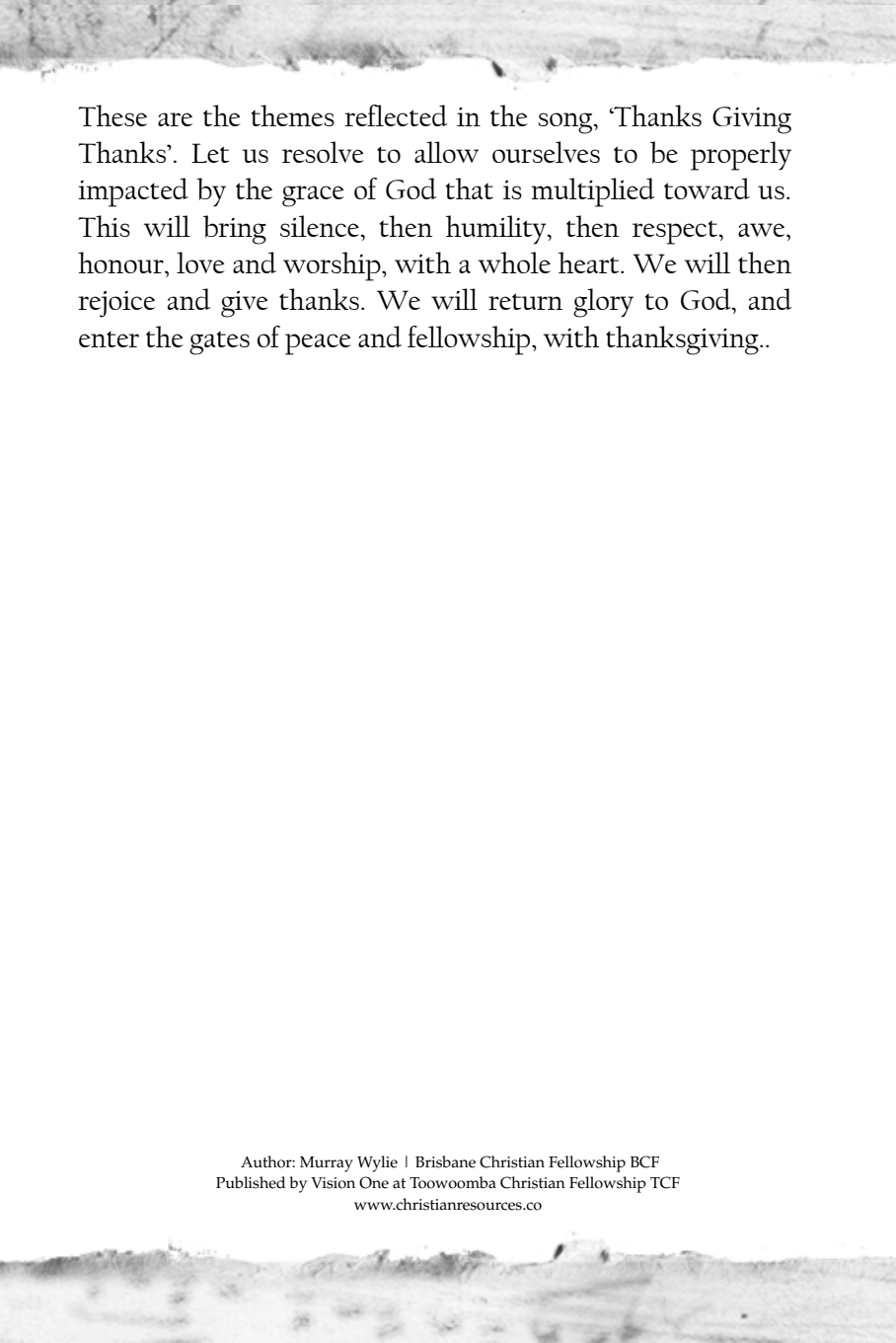
Thanksgiving - worship - fellowship

Jesus Himself, and then Paul, when discussing the communion meal, spoke about thanksgiving and blessing. With the bread that we are to break and share, the key word is 'thanksgiving'. With the cup, the key word is 'blessing'. Blessing describes all the grace that is being poured out to us, from the Lord, and through one another. Thanksgiving describes all the culture of response that is returning to the Lord, and to one another.

In this way, thanksgiving becomes a key to fellowship. What does this mean? When my response to you, and your response to me, is a full statement of 'worth', one to another, demonstrated in thanksgiving, then there is fellowship.

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These are the themes reflected in the song, 'Thanks Giving Thanks'. Let us resolve to allow ourselves to be properly impacted by the grace of God that is multiplied toward us. This will bring silence, then humility, then respect, awe, honour, love and worship, with a whole heart. We will then rejoice and give thanks. We will return glory to God, and enter the gates of peace and fellowship, with thanksgiving..