

Thanks Be To God

1 Corinthians 15:57;
2 Corinthians 2:14; 9:15

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FOCAL Read Responsively 1 Corinthians 15:57 But thanks be to God, {Who} giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place.

2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Imagine, if you will, your child coming to you and asking for a bicycle. The child pleads and pleads. Finally you decide to reward the child with what he asks. He wakes up one morning to find a bright and shiny bike, a beautiful red one, all ready to be ridden. The child looks at you and, with a quavering voice, says “But I wanted a *blue* one”. How would you feel?

We as humans do this same thing to our Creator every day. We receive His bounty. The Bible tells us that God continually does good toward us, **giving us rain from Heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness (Acts 14:17)**. God has been so good to all of us – whether we have believed in Him or not. Though **God does not have pleasure in wickedness (Psalm 5:4)** He has done good to all. He is, as He told His servant Moses:

Exodus 34:6-7 ... The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, {7} Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and

sin, ...

God does not give us what we deserve. Time and time again the children of Adam came to Christ for healing, and He turned none away. The leper was cleansed, the blind given sight, the dead were raised, and the lame were given strength to walk. Jesus healed, forgave, and made whole all who came to Him in faith. How was He treated? Many times Jesus healed, then sent those He healed away with the admonition “go and tell no one”. Jesus did what He did because God is love, and needed no reward to do good. But there were other times when Jesus healed, and, like humans will do, those healed quickly went away to live their lives without God. **Jesus healed ten lepers but only one returned to thank Him for His wondrous gift.** Jesus said:

Luke 17:17-19 ... Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? {18} There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this {Samaritan}. {19} And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

There's a lesson in this. God has given us great things. If we have received of His bounty – and there's no one who hasn't – then we need to stop and thank Him for what He has done. God is good! The Children of Israel suffered great desolation because they developed the all too human habit of *complaining* instead of *praising*. If you're drawing air into your lungs today you ought to be praising God. If your bellies are filled, you ought to be praising God. If your souls are saved because you called upon the Name of Jesus Christ for salvation, you ought

to be praising God. If you are a citizen of America you ought to be praising God.

As a pastor I have seen many call upon the Name of Jesus while they were in adversity. These same people, once blessed by His gracious love, walk away from the hospital, the courtroom, the prison, the valley of the shadow of death to go back to a life without Him. As we come to this holiday season I pray that we all stop our busy-ness, our running to and fro, and thank God for what He has done for us all.

1. Thanks Be To God That The Believer Has Victory Over Death

FOCAL 1 Corinthians 15:57 But thanks be to God, {Who} giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ then you should be thankful that *death has no power over you.*

Someone had come to the Corinthian believers and started a terrible rumor. They told the Corinthians that *death has a hold on the Christian*. I suspect this idea came from the Sadducees, a Jewish religious sect that believed that there was no such thing as a bodily resurrection. The Sadducees taught that when a person died that was it. They were dead. Some form of this foolishness crept into the Corinthian Church.

How did God counter the false doctrine that there is no such thing as a bodily resurrection? **He referred to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

The Apostle said:

CONTEXT 1 Corinthians 15:13-17 **But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: {14} And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. ... {16} For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: {17} And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.**

We who have believed on Jesus for salvation are **joint heirs with Christ**. What Christ did, we will do. What Christ purchased for us, we will have. The Apostle pointed out that it was *well documented* that Jesus Christ *rose from the grave and was seen*. This is the centerpiece of the Gospel of salvation, that ...

CONTEXT 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 **... Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; {4} And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day ...**

All of mankind was **dead in trespasses and in sin**. Adam sinned, and the **sons of Adam were all dead**. Separated from God, fouled not only by Adam's transgression, but also by our very black hearts. What did God say?

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, **as by one man sin entered**

into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

All have sinned. Death passed upon all. We were all born in the image of Adam, sinners, lost and undone. **But Jesus Christ died for our sins.** We could not make amends, we could not save ourselves, but He did it for us. We tried. Oh how we tried.

We were *spiritually* dead so we, in time, *physically* died. Body and spirit are tied together. We thought we could be good enough, but the Law of God proved that wrong.

ILLUSTRATE I'm sure you've all seen the red tailed wasps that often invade the chapel during the summertime. The Apostle uses an image much like this wasp in

CONTEXT 1 Corinthians 15:56 **The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.**

Death is looked at as if it were a *terrible wasp*, and the stinger of that wasp is *sin*. This wasp called DEATH stings its victims repeatedly by **sin**, and the **Law of God** gives this stinger strength. This wasp called *death* does not die when it stings us.

How do we get away from this wasp called *death* and its terrible stinger called *sin*? God has made a way through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jesus died for our sins. We who believe in Him are **not condemned.** Why? **Because He was condemned for us.** He suffered the penalty of sin *for us*. Though Jesus Christ, God's Son, was without sin, the Bible tells us that:

Hebrews 13:12 ... that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

Shamed, rejected, and refused, He went to Calvary for us. **Christ died for us.** Christ

1 Peter 2:22-24 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: {23} Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: {24} Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

That which God heals, He heals entirely. Jesus not only died for our sins, but **He rose again on the third day.** He rose again to show us that He is the Source of life. Jesus Christ is the Source of Spiritual Life, and the Source of Everlasting Life. Those who are His by faith, **believing in Him**

John 20:31 ... believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Believing you might have life. Thanks be unto God that it is ...

Titus 3:5-7 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; {6} Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; {7} That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

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Our victory over both spiritual and physical is not through the Law, nor through our own works, but **through our Lord Jesus Christ.** Read the words with me: **“God has GIVEN us the victory”.**

Thanks be to God that we who believe will never stand before God's **Great White Throne.** In the closing chapters of the Bible we see a horrible scene. Those foolish people who refused Christ as Savior must be judged. God's Apostle said

Revelation 20:11 ... I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

This is not a place where the Children of God are

gathered. Before this terrible but Great White Throne we **see the dead, both small and great**. These are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, but these are all those people who said “I don't believe that Jesus is the only Way to God. I don't believe that a loving God will cast man into an eternal hell. I don't believe that I can't live life my own way and just be good enough for Heaven”.

The Great White Throne is God's answer to those who say “I think I'm good enough to get into Heaven”. Those who stand before it are **dead, frightened, and ultimately rejected**.

We are told that:

Revelation 20:13 ... death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

"Every man was judged according to his works".

Did any get into Heaven based on their works? No. The Scripture is quite plain that:

Revelation 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Heirs of God – children of God by faith in Christ Jesus – will not be here. Just those poor deluded souls that rejected Christ, they will be **cast into the Lake of Fire that burneth forever**. This is not where we who believe

will be. **We have not received the spirit of bondage to fear, but we have received the Spirit of adoption, and we cry out, Abba, Father! (Romans 8:14-16).**

Thanks be to God Who gives us the victory over death!

2. Thanks Be To God, Who Causes Us To Triumph In Life

FOCAL 2 Corinthians 2:14 **Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place.**

As Christians together with me I know that you are often dismayed at the state of the world. Sometimes we feel so weary, almost as if the task before us is beyond us. Can I say this with all sincerity: **the task before us is beyond us**. But it is not beyond God!

You *enter* the Christian way of life by faith, and you *live* the Christian way of life by faith.

ILLUSTRATE God never uses the equipped or the powerful. Look at the testimony of Scripture. **Saul** was Israel's first monarch. The Bible tells us of Saul that he was ...

1 Samuel 9:2 ... a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and

upward he was higher than any of the people.

Oh, this man was the High School quarterback! He was the Big Man on Campus! He was strong, tall, big – and also the worst King Israel ever had. Who was Israel's best King (outside of the Lord Jesus Christ?). **A little Shepherd named David.** What was the difference between the two? **David was a man after God's own heart.** The Lord told His people:

1 Samuel 16:7 man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Without Christ broken things bring sadness. **Broken bottles, broken plates, broken switches, broken gates. Broken dishes, broken parts, streets are filled with broken hearts. Broken words, never meant to be spoken, everything is broken. Broken bodies, broken bones, broken voices on broken phones. Take a deep breath, feel like you're chokin', everything is broken. Broken treaties, broken vows, broken hands on broken plows. Broken pipes, broken tools, people bending broken rules. Everything is broken.**¹

God uses broken things. Take your brokenness to Christ. As evangelist **Vance Havner** said:²

"God uses broken things. It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grain to give bread, broken bread to give strength. It is the broken alabaster box that gives forth perfume.

¹ Robert Zimmerman

² in his book *Pepper and Salt*, page

It is Jacob limping from Jabbok who has power with God and men. It is Peter, weeping bitterly, who returns to greater power than ever".

As the Apostle spoke to the Corinthians once more he wanted them to know that their success in partnering with God did not depend on their own strength, but on their *dependence on God in Christ.*

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We were saved **through Christ**, but now we **triumph in Christ.** We do not stand for God in our own power, but in His power. Just as a few believers trusting God saw the stronghold of Jericho fall, we who live in Him will triumph because **we are in Him.**

The Bible says:

Revelation 17:14 ... the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings ...

Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. While we who are His are in His employ we shall see victory, for He is victorious!

When we stand apart from Christ we are weak. But when we **stand with Christ we are strong.** Look at the disciples. While the disciples followed Christ and did as

He said they were blessed. **“Master, it is as You said! The devils are subject to us through Your Name!”** Satan has no power when we who are Christ's stand together with Him. There is no mountain that can destroy us, no hill we cannot climb, but we must remember **our triumph is in Him**. Peter standing in his own power said to Jesus **"I'll not let you go to the Cross"**. This is the way of destruction, the way of Satan. Jesus told Peter, **"Get thee behind Me, Satan: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men"** (Mark 8:33). How Peter's ears must have burned! And yet, there are many who profess Christ and seek victorious living, but will not follow the Risen Lord.

You will never have victory in this life until you live in Christ. Is your business failing? Make it “in Christ”. Is your family falling apart? Begin to put them “in Christ”. Is your Church faltering? Point the flock to Christ. Only in Christ will God cause us to triumph.

*Some 77 times in the Scripture the Bible uses the phrase **in Christ**. If your life is not in Christ, you will never find fulfillment. If your life is in Christ then the Lord will use you to change your world.*

In our world today post-Modernism has taught so many to believe that truth just doesn't matter. Your job as God's people is to live your lives so that the world knows *truth matters with God*. There is death, and there is life – but life is only found in Christ. If you will live in Him and for Him then God will use you – and thanks be to God – we will triumph in Christ!

3. Thanks Be Unto God For His Unspeakable Gift

FOCAL 2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

God has not only promised us eternity *through Christ*, and not only promised us that we shall triumph in this life *in Christ*, but He has also promised to give us **exceeding Grace**.

Every believer – living their lives unto God – are pools of grace and blessing in this life. God is at work in us. He never gives up, working in the life of the believer from the point of salvation until we reach glory.

As the Apostle closed this second letter to the Corinthian Church he commanded them to give as God had given unto them. As God has prospered you materially, so give of your material things. As God has prospered you spiritually, so give of your spiritual things.

It is God's design that every Christian live their lives like Christ. As we begin to understand this and, like Peter, begin to step out on faith, God will reproduce the characteristics of Christ in us. He rose from the grave so that He could be both High Priest and King over a nation of Kings and Priests. I commend you on your progress as believers, and beg you to remember the exhortation to

CONTEXT 1 Corinthians 15:58 be ye steadfast,

unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Or as Jesus said in another place:

John 14:19 ... because I live, ye shall live also.

Live for Him, and be blessed!

May God touch your hearts with His Word!



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Also see 1 Corinthians 15:13-17 ; 1 Corinthians 15:3-
4 ; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:56 ; Hebrews
13:12; 1 Peter 2:22-24; John 20:31; Titus 3:5-7;
Revelation 20:11; Revelation 20:13; Revelation 20:15;
Romans 8:14-16 _____

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