

2. Reasons for Thanksgiving and Prayer (1Q 2026 Christ in Philippians and Colossians)

Biblical material: Phil. 1:1–18, 1 Cor. 13:1–8, Jer. 17:9, Col. 1:1–12, 1 Pet. 1:4, Ps. 119:105, Isa. 30:21.

Quotes

- Thankfulness is the beginning of gratitude. Gratitude is the completion of thankfulness.
- Thankfulness may consist merely of words. Gratitude is shown in acts. *Henri Frederic Amiel*
- If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough. *Meister Eckhart*
- Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it. *William Arthur Ward*
- When you rise in the morning, give thanks for the light, for your life, for your strength. Give thanks for your food and for the joy of living. If you see no reason to give thanks, the fault lies in yourself. *Tecumseh*
- Prayer is a surge of the heart, it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy. *Therese of Lisieux*
- Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him. *Augustine*

Questions

Why was Paul so thankful for other Christian believers? Do our own prayers match those of Paul? Are our prayers “the opening the heart to God as to a friend”? How does God’s word “as a lamp” fit into all this? How can we learn to be thankful despite the circumstances in which we find ourselves? How can we best express our thankfulness?

Bible summary

In Philippians 1:1–18 Paul’s great reason for thankfulness are the members of the church in Philippi. 1 Corinthians 13:1–8 is the “love chapter.” Jeremiah 17:9 states that the human mind is deceptive. Paul’s thankfulness for the Colossae church leads to his prayers for them (see Colossians 1:1–12). Peter points to our eternal inheritance (see 1 Peter 1:4). God’s word is a lamp that shows us where to walk (see Psalm 119:105). Similarly Isaiah 30:21.

Comment

What are we thankful for, and how should we be praying? Even those aspects of life that appear more substantial and permanent—career, position, family, friends, home—end. Like the wise man we ask ourselves what benefit there is in anything when we discover it’s all just chasing after the wind.

We may even forget to even wonder why all this dissatisfaction should be. Why are we not happy in this world? Why do we seek for something more? Why are we looking for answers anyway? What makes us thankful? What drives us to search for meaning and purpose, a sense of something more than what we see and hear and feel? How is it we are so different from every other living thing that never seems to look for more? Why do we want what this world can never give us? Strange...

“Listen to your life,” writes Frederick Buechner. “See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. Touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are sacred moments and life itself is grace.”

Life itself is grace. Only by seeing ourselves as more than a chance formation of random molecules does anything begin to make any kind of sense. Only if our existence has meaning and

purpose beyond our immediate selves can we find sanity. Only if life truly is grace is there sense in living and not in ending the meaninglessness.

As we look up into the immeasurable immensity of space, and recognize our minuteness in the grand scale of the cosmos, it's easy to be overwhelmed. If we are just accidental, without intent or created purpose, then truly we are less than dust.

But if we are more—if we are the children of God—then we see with different eyes. “When I look at the galaxies on a clear night—when I look at the incredible brilliance of creation, and think that this is what God is like, then instead of feeling intimidated and diminished by it, I am enlarged... I rejoice that I am a part of it,” says Madeleine L. Engle.

The truth is that we *are* here for a reason. More than that, we were not made for this world alone. And ultimately, the heart of joy and satisfaction and meaning is in knowing that God made us, and saves us. As Christina Rossetti writes, “Were there no God, we would be in this glorious world with grateful hearts and no one to thank.”

When I reflect on those times when I have felt so close to God, I realize that my delight has not been in achievements we so often define as success. Nor is there the lasting satisfaction in the things we usually chase after for enjoyment—the physical simply does not last, and eventually every earthly pleasure cloy. Ultimately all our grasping after feeling good leaves us empty, unsatisfied.

For this life cannot be all there is. “Our Creator would never have made such lovely days, and given us the deep hearts to enjoy them, above and beyond all thought, unless we were meant to be immortal,” says Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Meant to be immortal. That's why we seem so out-of-harmony here, in this world of sin and death where nothing lasts. God planned for us to live with him forever. This should bring us the deepest thankfulness, and give direction to all our prayers.

Ellen White Comments

Educate the soul to cheerfulness, to thankfulness, and to the expression of gratitude to God for the great love wherewith He hath loved us.... Christian cheerfulness is the very beauty of holiness. Speak Pleasant, Cheery Words—Pleasant, cheery words cost no more than unpleasant, moody words. Do you dislike to have harsh words spoken to you? Remember that when you speak such words, others feel the sharp sting.... Parents, bring practical godliness into the home. Angels are not attracted to a home where discord reigns. Educate your children to speak words that will bring sunshine and joy.

Encourage a Happy Frame of Mind—If there is anyone who should be continually grateful, it is the Christian. If there is anyone who enjoys happiness, even in this life, it is the faithful follower of Jesus Christ. It is the duty of God's children to be cheerful. They should encourage a happy frame of mind. God cannot be glorified by His children living continually under a cloud and casting a shadow wherever they go. The Christian should cast sunshine instead of a shadow.... He will bear a cheerful countenance. {CG 146-7}

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. {SC 93.2}

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. The eye of faith will discern God very near, and the suppliant may obtain precious evidence of the divine love and care for him. The prayer that Nathanael offered came from a sincere heart, and it was heard and answered by the Master. The Lord reads the hearts of all, and “the prayer of the upright is His delight.”...

Those who teach and preach the most effectively are those who wait humbly upon God, and watch hungrily for His guidance and His grace. Watch, pray, work—this is the Christian's watchword. The life of a true Christian is a life of constant prayer. {GW 257.3}