

—{1}. **1 Corinthians 15:57** **“Extreme Thanksgiving”**

A. Introduction

1. for those whose athletic endeavours are mainly confined to spectator sports, this is the silly season
 - a. the baseball season is drawing to a close with all the drama of the playoffs and world series
 - b. the football season is well under way, with both college and professional teams playing nearly every weekend
 - c. the hockey season has just started and many will now live and die with the fortunes of the Maple Leafs – and people who wouldn't dream of speaking in public will call the radio station and criticize over the air waves decisions made by Paul Maurice in last night's game
 - d. some wives will see their husbands and / or children perched for hours in front of the TV every weekend, not hearing a call to dinner – nor coming to eat – watching game after game after game
 - e. this is considered acceptable, because they are sports fans; that's just a shortened way of saying sports fanatics

2. it seems that it's alright to be a sports fanatics
 - a. Gil the golfer returned home at 8:00 and is greeted by Liz, saying, 'Gil, you promised to be home by 4'. Gil: 'Honey, please listen to me. Poor old Roger is in the hospital. He was knocked unconscious by a stray shot on the eighth green.' Liz: 'Oh! ... that's awful.' Gil: 'It sure was. For the rest of the game it was hit the ball, drag Roger, hit the ball, drag Roger...' —{2}.
 - b. now, that is not a true story, but the following news item appears to be, “At New Salem Missionary Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, in 2003, members voted 67-10 to fire pastor Stanley Hall, who had refused to reschedule his consecration service even though it conflicted with the telecast of the Super Bowl.” —{3}.
 - c. and apparently, there is a company called 'Eternal Image' which will inscribe your coffin or urn with the colours of your favourite baseball team and a message recognizing you as their lifelong fan. —{4}.
 - d. which does illustrate the ends to which sports fans may go in pursuit of their favourite sport
 - e. on the other hand, being a religious fanatic is considered extremist and unacceptable. 'A pastor tells of

one family where the grandparents attended his church. One day the grandfather spoke to him, "I'm worried about my grandson," he said. "What's the problem?" I asked. He said, "When he gets up in the morning, he reads the Bible before he does anything else. Every time he sits at the kitchen table, he insists on saying grace. Now he's talking about joining a prayer group with his girlfriend." "Walter," I said, "what's the problem?" "Don't get me wrong, Reverend," he said. "Religion is a good thing, as long as it's in small doses. I'm worried my grandson is becoming an extremist." —{5}.

3. there is a kind of sports called 'extreme sports'

a. in it the participant pushes the envelope to the very edge

b. be it dirt bike racing, mountain climbing, parachuting

c. showing one's passion for the sport by risking one's life and limb to the extreme

d. and, in the matter of thanksgiving, we are asked to be gentle fanatics and harmless extremists:

(A) "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:18 NAS)

(B) that we be "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;" (Ephesians 5:20 NAS)

e. let me suggest to you this Thanksgiving Sunday morning that there are four reasons why all people should give thanks to God, and one very special reason why Christians should do so

B. One: He Is Creator —"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end." (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV)

1. wherever we look, we see the beauty of God's creation

a. in the intricate design that is found in the most minute to the largest of His creatures

b. in the marvels of the day and night time sky, so that "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands." (Psalms 19:1 NAS)

c. in the grandeur of the hills and valleys, the mountains and the plains in their many-faceted splendour

d. the awesome torrent that is Niagara falls

2. all of which are from 'God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. (1 Timothy 6:17 NAS), bringing

us to ...

C. Two: His Providence – “While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease.” (Genesis 8:22 NAS)

1. Thomas Chisolm has reflected this truth in the hymn, “Great is Thy Faithfulness” ^{–{6}}.

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

a. every morning as we arise, the truth of God’s providential care is proven anew – for He has given day for activity and the night for the refreshment of sleep

b. this world has the resources to provide food, raiment and shelter for every single inhabitant ... it is only ‘man’s inhumanity to man’ that denies this due to greed

2. while we may expend labour in the sowing, weeding, and final harvesting, the actual bounty that we now reap and enjoy is the result of God’s goodness and mercy, our “... Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.” (Matthew 5:45 NAS)

D. Three: For our Family & Friends – “Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” (Genesis 28:14 NAS) ... “A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.” (Proverbs 17:17 NAS)

1. God is a God of relationships

a. it is shown in His very nature where as One essence or being He subsists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit

b. it is shown by His work in creation of man in that male and female He created them that they might marry and be one

2. and, as illustrative of the relationship which He desires that men and women would have with Himself
 - a. He has made the family one of the most precious things that people can enjoy in this life – a fact that even people who have rejected family will confess to be so
 - b. and friends the most valued of our possessions
 - c. for which we should give thanks

E. Four: He Gives Life – “The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” (Job 33: 4 NAS); ... “nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people life and breath and all things*” (Acts 17:25 NAS)

1. it is spiritually popular to disparage life, health, strength and intellect and all the blessing attendant with them
 - a. by quoting Philippians 3: 7-8 out of its context and thus misapplying it, saying “I count all these earthly benefits and relationships as garbage”
 - b. but Paul is talking about having confidence to stand before God because of these benefits and relationships, and that in this respect he counted his Jewishness as garbage
 - c. and indeed, used those benefits – his citizenship, his training, – throughout his ministry and in witnessing to rulers, to the glory of God and the spread of the gospel
2. for to disparage life and its benefits is to disparage the God who has given them to us for His glory
 - a. rather they should be a well from which we draw thanks
 - b. to express our gratitude for our many such blessings

F. Five: He Gives Spiritual Victory – “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:56-57 NAS); in this verse we address the Christian’s reason for thanksgiving:

1. spiritual victory in our salvation from sin
 - a. then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will.’ ... By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:9a, 10 NAS)

- b. but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, 'sat down at the right hand of God', (Hebrews 10:12 NAS)
 - c. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. (Hebrews 10:14 NAS)
 - d. Christ, on the cross, dealt with our sin once for all
2. spiritual victory in our salvation to eternal life
- a. This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (Jn 17:3 NAS)
 - b. Jesus said, "... I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly." (John 10:10 NAS)
 - c. and he said, "In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." (John 14:2 NKJV)
3. thank you God for the spiritual victory in the Lord Jesus Christ

G. Conclusion

1. all of mankind has a debt to give thanksgiving to God
- a. for His creation
 - b. for His providence
 - c. for family and friends
 - d. for life itself
2. but for those who know Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour
- a. who know the blessed relief from guilt because He has...
 - (A) ... taken away our sins as far as the east from the west
 - (B) ... blotted out as a thick cloud our transgressions
 - b. who know they have an eternal home in God's presence ... **No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.** – (1 Corinthians 2:9 NLT)
 - c. they have occasion for gratitude
 - (A) to the cutting edge of their existence

(B) to give thanks to the extreme ...

How can I say thanks for the things You have done for me—
Things so undeserved, yet You give to prove your love for me?
The voices of a million angels could not express my gratitude—
All that I am and ever hope to be, I owe it all to Thee.
To God be the glory, to God be the glory,
To God be the glory, for the things He has done!
With His blood He has saved me, with His pow'r He has raised me—
To God be the glory, for the things He has done! ^{7}.

3. let us close by giving thanks – Give Thanks

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. “Lessons from the Locker Room’ from sermon by Dr Lowell Streiker – Kerux illustrations #2653
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