



fellowship
Love God. Love People. Develop Disciples.

Part 2

Remembering the Goodness of God

November 29, 2015

Last Sunday: On the Brink of Thanksgiving, Jackie reminded us, through scripture, that during this season of Thanksgiving, that we should:



“Pause & Remember the goodness of our Creator, Provider, Redeemer.” Did you take time this week in reflection for the great things that God has done in your life? I am finding, in my own personal life, that it is not that difficult to remember who God

is and to thank him for his many blessings; however, I have noticed another thing that seems to be somewhat more difficult. This week I want to ask you a question, and it is one that I have asked myself during the course of this week, once you’ve taken the time to **“Pause & Remember the goodness of our Creator, Provider, Redeemer,”** how are you different? In other words, how is this thankfulness about His goodness played out in your life? What is the true litmus test for whether or not we are truly thankful for who God is and what God has done? The answer, I believe, can be found in scripture, and summed up with today’s Big Truth:



What are you driven by in life?

Depending on your goals, age and at what stage you are at in your life, the factors that motivate you will be different. However, we as humans are enticed by any number of things. For example, money, independence, security: job, financial, or just peace of mind. It could be freedom, status, power, prestige, recognition or respect, making an impact in

people’s lives, or are you driven to “prove people wrong?” What drives you? Where do you place your interests, your energy, your knowledge, your confidence, your resources, your... faith?

I certainly do not want to minimize the role of giving thanks to God. It’s abundantly clear in scripture that we are called to give thanks. For instance:

1 Thess. 5:18 NIV

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give **thanks in all circumstances**; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

According to scripture, we are called to be a **thankful** people. So we should pause and remember God our Creator, Provider, Redeemer. This should not just be a once a year thing, but rather a part of our daily routine!!

What is the sign that you are **truly** thankful for all the things that God has done for you?

Answer: It will be lived out in your life!

I believe that one of the saddest claims for a christian is: "They are a good actor/actress... also they claim to be a Christian." Are you more known for your love of sports than for your love of Jesus? Or maybe, you are more known for our political stance than our spiritual stance? This should not be!! Although I believe Christians should be involved in sports, politics, acting; it should be abundantly clear who we are, and what we are thankful for, simply by what drives us.

Today we are going to see in scripture, that Paul lived what he was thankful for! It is evident by the way that he lived his life that he was driven by God his Creator, Provider, Redeemer!

In the last part of Acts 15, Paul and Silas begin what is known as Paul's "second missionary journey." They traveled through Syria, Cicillia, Lystra, Derbe, Galatia, and Troas (as well as a few other places along the way), and finally we find them Macedonia. More specifically, beginning in Thessalonica.

Acts 17:2-4

² **As was his custom**, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah," he said. ⁴ Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.

Evidence of Accuracy in Luke's writing. This would not have been a far fetched thought that many "prominent women," could be added to the church, since in Macedonian provinces the idea of prominent women was something that they were accustomed to.

Chief women. The position of women in Macedonia seems to have been exceptional. The Athenian law provided that everything which a man might do by the counsel or request of a woman should be null in law. She was little better than a slave. To educate her was to advertise her as a harlot. Her companions were principally children and slaves. In Macedonia, however, monuments were erected to women by public bodies; and records of male proper names are found, in Macedonian inscriptions, formed on the mother's name instead of on the father's. Macedonian women were permitted to hold property, and were treated as mistresses of the house. These facts are borne out by the account of Paul's labors in Macedonia. In Thessalonica, Berea, and Philippi we note additions of women of rank to the church; and their prominence in church affairs is indicated by Paul's special appeal to two ladies in

the church at Philippi to reconcile their differences, which had caused disturbance in the church, and by his commending them to his colleagues as women who had labored with him in the Lord (Philip. 4:2, 3).

Acts 17:5

⁵ But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city.^h They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.

Why does it seem that the people that are standing around, doing nothing, always the ones that want to stir up trouble?

Acts 17:6-7

⁶ But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, ⁷ and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus."

Thessalonica was not a *colony*, but a *free city* (see on *colony*, ch. 16:12), and was governed by its own rulers, whose titles accordingly did not follow those of Roman magistrates.

After leaving Thessalonica, they headed to Berea, this time using the same message, with a different outcome. V.10 tells us that through the cover of darkness Paul and Silas headed down to Berea. After arriving there they went into the Jewish Synagogues and reasoned through the scriptures.

Acts 17:11-12

¹¹ Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica,^s for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures^t every day to see if what Paul said was true.^u ¹² As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men

However...

Acts 17:13-15

¹³ But when the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea,^w some of them went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up. ¹⁴ The believers^x immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas^y and Timothy^z stayed at Berea. ¹⁵ Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens^a and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.^b

Acts 17:16-21

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some

of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news^d about Jesus and the resurrection.^e ¹⁹ Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus,^f where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching^g is that you are presenting?" ²⁰ You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." ²¹ (All the Athenians^h and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

"Athens" This was the greatest city of Greece's past cultural heritage and still the intellectual center of the Roman world. It was steeped in tradition, superstition and immorality.

"We learn from Pliny that at the time of Nero, Athens contained over three thousand public statues, besides a countless number of lesser images within the walls of private houses. Of this number the great majority were statues of gods, demi-gods, or heroes. In one street there stood before every house a square pillar carrying upon it a bust of the god Hermes. Another street, named the Street of the Tripods, was lined with tripods, dedicated by winners in the Greek national games, and carrying each one an inscription to a deity. Every gateway and porch carried its protecting god. Every street, every square, nay, every purlieu, had its sanctuaries, and a Roman poet bitterly remarked that it was easier in Athens to find gods than men" (G. S. Davies, "St. Paul in Greece").

Epicureans. Disciples of Epicurus, and atheists. They acknowledged God in words, but denied his providence and superintendence over the world. According to them, the soul was material and annihilated at death. Pleasure was their chief good; and whatever higher sense their founder might have attached to this doctrine, his followers, in the apostle's day, were given to gross sensualism. This group believed that pleasure or happiness was the highest good and goal of life. They believed in no personal, physical afterlife. "Enjoy life now" was their motto (a form of hedonism).

Stoics. Pantheists. God was the soul of the world, or the world was God. Everything was governed by fate, to which God himself was subject. They denied the universal and perpetual immortality of the soul; some supposing that it was swallowed up in deity; others, that it survived only till the final conflagration; others, that immortality was restricted to the wise and good. Virtue was its own reward, and vice its own punishment. Pleasure was no good, and pain no evil.

Acts 17:22

²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious.

There would be a crowd of spectators and philosophers in either case and Paul seized the opportunity to preach Christ to this strange audience as he did in Caesarea before Herod Agrippa and the crowd of prominent people gathered by Festus for the entertainment.

Acts 17:23

²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: **to an unknown god**. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

“Unknown God”

***“The most rational explanation is unquestionably that of those who suppose these altars to have had their origin in the feeling of uncertainty, inherent, after all, in the minds of the heathen, whether their acknowledgment of the superior powers was sufficiently full and comprehensive; in their distinct consciousness of the limitation and imperfection of their religious views, and their consequent desire to avoid the anger of any still unacknowledged god who might be unknown to them. That no deity might punish them for neglecting his worship, or remain uninvoked in asking for blessings, they not only erected altars to all the gods named or known among them, but, distrustful still lest they might not comprehend fully the extent of their subjection and dependence, they erected them also to any other god or power that might exist, although as yet unrevealed to them.... Under these circumstances an allusion to one of these altars by the apostle would be equivalent to his saying to the Athenians thus: ‘You are correct in acknowledging a divine existence beyond any which the ordinary rites of your worship recognize; there is such an existence. You are correct in confessing that this Being is unknown to you; you have no just conceptions of his nature and perfections.’ ”

The Greeks were afraid they may have forgotten or left out of their worship an important deity who might cause trouble if neglected, so they regularly had monuments of this type (cf. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1:1:4 and Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 6:3:5).

So Paul clearly defines what drives him

Acts 17:24

²⁴ “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.

Here is God the “**Creator**.” The word is used here in the classical sense of the visible creation, which would appeal to the Athenians. “does not dwell in temples made with hands” This is a quote from (1) the OT (cf. 1 Kings 8:27; Isa. 66:1–2) or (2) a Greek philosopher, Euripides, Fragment 968. There are several quotes in this context from Greek writers (cf. vv. 25 & 28). Paul was also trained in Greek scholastics.

Acts 17:25

²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

God our Provider.

It refers to the clothing of the images of the gods in splendid garments, and bringing them costly gifts and offerings of food and drink. This same thought is found in (1) Euripides' *Heracles* 1345f; (2) Plato's *Euthyphro* 14c; (3) Aristobulus, Fragment 4; or (4) Psalm 50:9–12. The Greek temples were often seen as the place where the gods were fed and cared for. As though he needed (προσδεόμενος). Properly, “needed anything in addition (πρός) to what he already has.”-God is the provider, not us.

Acts 17:26-27

²⁶ From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

This is a people that spent so much of their time trying to determine all of the philosophies of the day that they did not realize how close God truly is!

Acts 17:28

²⁸ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

A line from Aratus, a poet of Paul's own province of Cilicia. The same sentiment, in almost the same words, occurs in the fine hymn of Cleanthes to Jove. Hence the words, “Some of your own poets.”

Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*. He was the head of the Stoic school from 263–232 b.c. or 2. Aratus's (from Soli, a city near Tarsus) *Phainomena*, line 5. Aratus was from Cilicia and lived from 315–240 b.c. This quote emphasizes either

- a. God's immanence (cf. v. 27) or
- b. God's creation of all humans (cf. v. 26).

Acts 17:29-33

²⁹ “Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill.³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”³² When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.”³³ At that, Paul left the Council.

God Our Redeemer.

It is through the Resurrection that Jesus became the Redeemer for all of those who place their trust in Him. This became evident in Paul's life. You see, he was convinced that God is our creator, provider, redeemer. Paul, once the one that persecuted Christians, as well as thought he had the truth, became completely thankful after finding the truth. So much so that it he was driven by this knowledge. He went from Thanks Given...To Livin' Driven.



Acts 17:34

³⁴ Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

Paul Lived Driven; God Provided the Increase

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These open-ended questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your Family, Friends, or Small Group.

1. What did you think of today's teaching? What is one thing that stood out to you?
2. Would you consider yourself to be a "driven" person? Why are/or aren't you a driven person?
3. At the beginning of the message, T.J. asked the question, "What are you driven by in life?" What would your honest answer be to that question? What are the "motivating factors" in your life? Give reasons.
4. Have three different people reread the sections from Acts for this morning. **Acts 17:1-9; Acts 17:10-15; Acts 17:16-34.** Would you describe Paul as a driven person? Why do you think that he was so driven? How do you see this played out through this passage? What is something that you personally can take from the way Paul conducted himself in Macedonia?
5. I know we all want to be seen as "driven" people. But the question we have to ask is, "is it evident in our life?" If possible, take some time to share the evidence you can see in the other group members lives that you can see that they are "Livin' Driven."
6. Last week we paused to remember God our Creator, Provider, Redeemer. Being thankful for all of the things that He has done for you, how does this change the way you live moving forward? Who is someone that you can, do like Paul, and share about our Creator, Provider, Redeemer God?

* Share your prayer needs and **PRAY to the FATHER together!** Pray for a lost friend that **You** can share the gospel with this week!

