

The Meaning of *Thanksgiving*

"In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." - 1st Thessalonians 5:16

By Dr. Paul Jehle, Executive Director, Plymouth Rock Foundation

The modern holiday of Thanksgiving is a dim reflection of the Biblical and historic origins that are rooted in the United States of America. In order to peruse the meaning of this holiday, we must look at its Biblical meaning and also the development of the holiday from the early settlers to today.

What does it mean to give thanks?

When the Bible says "*in everything give thanks*" we might be prone to question the injunction, in *everything*? Not everything that happens to us is worth thanking God for, we might say.



There is no question that many things that happen are evil, difficult, and filled with turmoil, sorrow and tragedy. However, what the Scriptures address is our response to these things that happen to us, whether they are good or bad. In one sense, we are not to give thanks *for everything*, but rather *in everything*, or in the midst of every situation.

Giving thanks to God in the midst of difficult events that happen to us is only possible if we have the right perspective. What do we deserve? What does God guarantee us? Is happiness an eternal right? The answers to these questions help us focus on the right perspective.

If we deserve nothing due to the sinful condition of our nature, then anything we have brings gratitude. If God guarantees, not happiness or good happenings as we might define it, but the assurance that He has allowed what happens in order to build our character, then our perspective changes.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" Luke 17:15-17

Once Jesus healed ten lepers, but only one returned and gave Him thanks. He replied, "*were there not ten cleansed?*" The ingratitude may appear shocking, but it only reveals a similar culture here in America as well.

We live in ungrateful times. Children no longer thank their parents for providing shelter, food and clothing. Parents no longer thank employers for providing them a job. Church members often fail to thank those that serve them with sacrifice and faithfulness. Why?

We have perverted God's provisions into entitlement guarantees. American preachers on television often tell their viewers what they want to hear - that all that God has for them is health, wealth and happiness. Anything less would be beneath their status as a King's kid.

But this perverts both God's goodness and man's need. God is perfect, holy and righteous, owing us nothing. We are sinful, perverted and warped, and owe Him everything. If we don't start here, our basis for giving thanks will be selfish and limited.

Giving thanks is thus our duty, and the first response we owe our Creator. We ought to be thankful for each breath, for we have no guarantee of tomorrow. We ought to be thankful for those who serve us, and thankful for every meal and the simple joys of life.

The Feast of Tabernacles: *the Biblical holiday of Thanksgiving*

If it is God's will that we give Him thanks for even the most mundane of blessings so that we do not take Him for granted, and we maintain the best perspective that will not only help us but others, does the Bible give us an example of actually celebrating a time of Thanksgiving as a holy day (or holiday during the year)?

"Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'the fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the Lord'" - Leviticus 23:34

The Feast of Tabernacles was also called the feast of *booths*, for during the feast the Israelites were to make temporary shelters during the week long celebration, being reminded of what it was like to live for forty years in the wilderness.

This feast was also known as the feast of *ingathering*, for it occurred after crops had been harvested. It was a feast of thanksgiving and joy, celebrating God's goodness during the forty year wilderness journey, and the present goodness of the Lord in providing all we need now.

The time of this feast was late September through the middle of October, or the time of harvest. No work could be done on these days, and this soon became the most prominent of all Jewish holidays. It was sometimes referred to simply as "the holiday."

Three times a year all males were to take a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to appear before the Lord in the temple. These three times were Passover (late March to mid-April), Pentecost (fifty days later, or usually in May), and Tabernacles (in the fall, or September-October). Thus, each of these three were at times called "pilgrim feasts."

It was during the Feast of Tabernacles that Solomon's temple was dedicated, and it also marked the change of seasons from fall to the winter rainy time. The anticipation of rain was symbolized during the feast as a drink offering as water was poured before the Lord.

The High Priest, with water from the Pool of Siloam, came to the southern gate known as the Water Gate. When he entered, three blasts from the silver trumpets were made, and with one voice all the priests repeated Isaiah 12:3 *"therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."*

Beginning on the second night, a light ceremony with four huge Menorah's, and priests dancing with torches singing the psalms of descent (Psalm 120-134) took place, as they had sung the songs of ascent earlier (Psalm 113-118). It was such a spectacle to see the lights of the temple in front of the backdrop of the darkness of night.¹

This was the symbol and meaning of the feast of Tabernacles. It was joy in the midst of suffering, pain and turmoil. It was not a feast that celebrated the absence of difficulty, but it was joy with gratitude for how God sustains you through the difficulty!



¹See Howard, Kevin and Rosenthal, Marvin, in *The Feasts of the Lord*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997, pages 135-148.

The Christian History of England



King Alfred is known as England's greatest King. After all, he is the only one to be called "the Great" of all the Kings England ever had. Why was this so? He was England's greatest Christian king, reigning in the 890's and making the Law of God the basis of England's civil laws and heritage.

The *Code of Laws* became so well known that every common person knew the Ten Commandments and how they formed the basis of civil liberty. Alfred added to this ancient code first drafted by St. Patrick as the *Liber Ex Leige Moisi*, the Beatitudes of Matthew 5. This became the cornerstone of what would be known as the common law.

After the Norman Conquest in 1066, the Christian element of England's history went underground, held as a birthright by the sturdy Saxons. Refusing the monarchy that was forced upon them, they kept such rights as ownership of the land and a bottom up representative government.

The writing of *Magna Charta* in 1215 restored some of the common law to England, putting limits on the King. However, in the 1500's, leaders like King Henry VIII and "bloody Mary", who persecuted Christians, brought believers into conflict with the State.

When Queen Elizabeth, the moderate ruler who tolerated the Reformation had died, King James of Scotland claimed the throne of England, and even crowned himself in 1603! This spelled trouble for all those who were a part of the revival known as the Reform.

It was King James that stated "*I will harry them out of the land*" to all those who opposed him. He spoke directly to the Separatists, later known as Pilgrims, when he said it was illegal for them to go, and it was illegal for them to stay.²



The Feast of Tabernacles: *Model for our First Thanksgiving?*

England thus inherited a rich, Christian heritage that included its Jewish roots. The origin of the harvest festival in England by the time the Pilgrims decided to leave was rooted in the Biblical practice of the Feast of Tabernacles. However, during the Reformation period believers celebrated three types of thanksgivings.

The first was a day of prayer (often coupled with fasting) and humiliation before God. This was a time to search one's soul and repent of all known and unknown sins after a drought, tragedy or some other moral or physical calamity.

The second was a day of thanksgiving for answered prayer offered during days of humiliation and fasting. This was usually called after the calamity passed, or the rains came.

The third was a harvest thanksgiving. Though some historians call this a "secular" holiday due to its distinction from the first two, nothing was secular to either a Pilgrim or a Puritan. This day was not a prayer (humiliation) day or an answer to prayer (thanksgiving) day, but a day to thank God with joy for His provision in the midst of difficulty.³

²Scott, Otto, *James I: the Fool as King*, Ross House Books, 1976, pages 279-280.

³See the web site www.pilgrimhall.org and the article by Jim Baker on the *Origin of Thanksgiving*.

Ponder and consider the following possibilities as to why this harvest festival could have been rooted in Jewish history and the Hebrew roots of Christianity practiced by the Pilgrims and Puritans.

1. The Pilgrims used the Jewish calendar of the new year beginning in March (Passover). Bradford delineates this throughout his book *Of Plimoth Plantation*.
2. The Pilgrims were familiar with the Jewish feasts, seeing their spiritual fulfillment in Christ, but refrained from celebrating the more “secular” holidays in England due to their departure from the Bible.
3. The meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles parallels the harvest festival in England that occurred in the Fall and was neither a prayer and fast day or a thanksgiving day (in the sense of giving thanks for answered prayer).
4. Though a thanksgiving day was not officially called every fall at the time of the harvest like the Feast of Tabernacles, thanks to God did always accompany any harvest.
5. Bradford identifies the day as a time to give thanks for their harvest, which they celebrated in the Fall.

The Pilgrims Embraced the Biblical doctrine of Giving Thanks to God

It was four hundred years ago, at about this time (2007), that those known as Pilgrims attempted to flee England for their faith.

John Smith was exploring Indian settlements in 1607, and around the close of the year was rescued by Pocahontas.⁴

The Popham Colony had been established in what is now Maine, and *Fort St. George* was being completed. The ship *Virginia*, first to be built by the English in the new world, would soon successfully sail to and from England for many years.⁵

It was Bradford that recalled the time of attempted escape, betrayal and difficulty for the Pilgrims. Always willing to look at the silver lining of God's faithfulness in the midst of turmoil, he wrote these words:

*"I may not omit the fruit that came hereby, for by these so public troubles, in so many eminent places, their cause became famous, and occasioned many to look into the same; and their godly carriage and Christian behavior was such, as left a deep impression in the minds of many. And though some few shrunk at these first conflicts, and sharp beginnings (as it was no marvel), yet many more came on with fresh courage, and greatly animated others."*⁶

Imagine giving thanks to God for publishing the cause of Christ at your expense. Would you or I be so grateful in the midst of being betrayed, put in jail, and separated from our spouses and children?

But that's not all. The Pilgrims thanked God the next year, in 1608, when they attempted to flee England again. The men had to watch their wives and children taken by the authorities while they watched from the boat. The captain, fearing for his life, sailed for Holland, experiencing a terrible storm for 14 days.

⁴Jehle, Paul, *Kingdom Seeds at America's Birth: 1607-2007*; Letter from Plymouth Rock, Vol. 30, Issue 1; Jan-Feb, 2007.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Bradford, William, *Of Plimoth Plantation*, edited by Caleb Johnson, 2006, page 46.

What was the attitude of the Pilgrims in their continued attempt to flee England and reach Holland?

*"But these things did not dismay them (though they did sometimes trouble them) for their desires were set on the ways of God, and to enjoy His ordinances, but they rested on His providence, and knew whom they had believed."*⁷

Their philosophy was simple and Biblical. Nothing happened to them that God did not allow, even tragedy. An attitude of gratitude, knowing they deserved nothing, kept them faithful to discern God's providential care in the midst of negative circumstances and difficult and sorrowful times.

Through the trials of getting an agreement to settle in the new world, the loss of the *Speedwell*, the difficult voyage, and the first winter where half their company died, the Pilgrims kept their Biblical view of giving thanks. They gave God thanks because *He* was good, not because *everything that happened to them was good*.



*"What could now sustain them but the Spirit of God and His grace? May not, and ought not the children of these fathers rightly say, 'Our fathers were Englishmen which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in this wilderness, but they cried unto the Lord, and He heard their voice, and looked on their adversity, etc. Let them therefore praise the Lord, because He is good; and His mercies endure forever.'"*⁸

Who had the First Thanksgiving?

St. Augustine, founded in 1565, claims to have had the first Thanksgiving in America.

Historian Michael Gannon has asserted this claim since 1985 that it took place September 8, 1565 the day 600 explorers landed in what is now Florida. Though his work has been criticized by some, he stands by it.

The Spanish, as was their custom, gave thanks to God for their safe voyage. *"It was the first community act of thanksgiving in a permanently established European settlement."*⁹

Jennifer Monac, Plimoth Plantation's public relations director, agrees that Plymouth did not have the first Thanksgiving as well, for she asserts *"the Wampanoag People have lived in the area of now Plymouth, Mass., for more than 12,000 years of giving thanks in their daily lives."*¹⁰

And let's not leave out Virginia, for she claims the first Thanksgiving in America also. In 1619 the ship *Margaret* from Bristol, England, arrived at Berkeley Hundred, a small town on the north bank of the James River on December the 4th.

⁷*Ibid.*, page 42.

⁸*Ibid.*, pages 112-113.

⁹See Staugustine.com/stories/112405/new_3476042.shtml for article by Margo C. Pope.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

Evidently the proprietors instructed the settlers “*the day of our ships arrival.... shall be yearly and perpetually kept as a day of Thanksgiving.*” The settlers did take a day to thank God for their same arrival.¹¹

If America’s tradition of Thanksgiving is to be traced from every community wide day that gave thanks to God, we have hundreds if not thousands of instances of such activity long before 1620, whether or not they are verifiable by the accepted standards of historic evidence from primary sources.

We must define our terms and clarify our intent here. The issue is not who had the *first* Thanksgiving as if that is what will make the Pilgrims significant, but rather what the *root* of our American tradition truly is, begun by the Pilgrims. What *kind* of Thanksgiving are we talking about?

The Pilgrim's First Thanksgiving

It belonged to the Pilgrims in the fall of 1621, to call a day of thanksgiving patterned after the Biblical Feast of tabernacles and mixing the joy of God’s provisions with the sorrow of hardships endured in life. This was truly unique, and to top it off, it was done by inviting 90 native people from the Wamponoag tribe as well! The Wampanoag gave thanks to their Creator long before the Pilgrims arrived, but the Pilgrim thanksgiving was unique – for it was patterned after a feast rooted in the Old Testament.

“They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercised in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides they had about a peck a meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports.”¹²



Though Bradford’s account identifies their gratitude for their good harvest after a most difficult winter, it belonged to Edward Winslow, in a letter to England, published in what is now known as *Mourt’s Relation*, to give us the details of this event.

“Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might, after a special manner, rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors.



¹¹ Berkeley Hundred, from Wikipedia at <http://en.wikipedia.org>

¹² Bradford, William, *Of Plimoth Plantation*, Caleb Johnson

They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king, Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted; and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation, and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others.

And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."¹³

Note that we do not know the original date of this event, though most suppose it to be in late October, which would correspond to the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. Note also that this day celebrated a harvest, giving thanks to God whom Bradford specifically identifies. Also, they feasted and celebrated for three days, thanking God for the provisions God gave them, enjoying it with the Native peoples.

They even had competitive games, though they would have no idea how Football would be mixed in with Thanksgiving almost four hundred years later in modern America! It would be hard to miss some of the parallels with the Feast of Tabernacles, though the tradition had taken on a more cultural flavor in England by this time.

Other details we know are:

1. All dishes were wooden, and children served the adults.
2. There were only four adult Pilgrim women alive, cooking for 140 guests!
3. They ate cod, sea bass, and fowl (ducks, geese and swan).
4. Wild turkeys were also consumed, but the turkeys of 1621 could run 25 miles an hour and were hard to catch!
5. There is even a legend that popcorn was first introduced by one of the Indians, but this cannot be proven.
6. Recreations included bow and arrow contests, military drills, foot races and wrestling.

Henry Morton Dexter recorded an anonymous poem about the First Thanksgiving, and it was this harvest festival, patterned after the Feast of Tabernacles, that was described:

*"We had gathered in our harvests, and stored the yellow grain,
For God had sent the sunshine, and sent the plenteous rain;
Our barley-land and corn-land had yielded up their store,
and the fear and dread of famine, oppressed our homes no more.*

*As the chosen tribes of Israel, in the far years of old,
when the summer fruits were garnered, and before the winter's cold,*

¹³ *Mourt's Relation*, Jordan Fiore, editor, Plymouth Rock Foundation, 1985, page 72.

*Kept their festal week with gladness, with songs and choral lays,
so we kept our first Thanksgiving in the hazy autumn days.”¹⁴*

In 1623 the Pilgrims demonstrated the other two kinds of public thanksgivings we have already mentioned. During an unusually long drought, they called for a day of prayer, humiliation and fasting.

As Bradford relates it:

“I may not omit here, how notwithstanding all their great pains and industry, and the great hopes of a large crop; the Lord seemed to blast, and take away the same, and to threaten further, and more sore famine unto them. By a great drought which continued from the 3rd week in May till about the middle of July, without any rain...

“Upon which they set apart a solemn day of humiliation; to seek the Lord by humble and fervent prayer, in this great distress. And He was pleased to give them a gracious, and speedy answer; both to their own, and the Indians’ admiration, that lived amongst them.

“For all the morning, and greatest part of the day, it was clear weather and very hot, and not a cloud, or any sign of rain to be seen; yet toward evening it began to overcast, and shortly after to rain, with such sweet and gentle showers, as gave them cause of rejoicing, and blessing God”¹⁵

After God answered their prayers, Bradford states *“for which mercy (in time convenient) they also set apart a day of thanksgiving.”¹⁶* This was the type of thanksgiving that prompted another service to thank God for answering their previous prayers of repentance.

Thanksgiving in America

Public calls for prayer, from either church or state, or both, became an annual part of the calendar in New England for almost three hundred years. More than three hundred days of public fasting and prayer, coupled with thanksgiving days for answered prayer, occurred between 1607 and 1800. That was more than two a year!¹⁷

The act of celebrating during a harvest festival was brought by the Pilgrims from England. The idea of thanking God for what He had provided, in the fall, and in the midst of hardship and difficulties, marked the Pilgrim idea of giving thanks as unique.

This, coupled with the need to publicly repent when calamity was allowed by God, and then thank Him when He answered those prayers, are all a part of the fabric of American society and culture. Indeed, we have much to be grateful for in America!

These two types of thanksgiving days; that of calling public days of humiliation, prayer and fasting, and then calling days of thanksgiving for answered prayer continued throughout the colonies.

¹⁴ Dexter, H.M., editor, *Songs of the Pilgrims*, 1887, page 105.

¹⁵ Bradford, pages 179-180.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, page 181.

¹⁷ See Love, DeLoss, Jr., *Fast and Thanksgiving Days*, Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1895.

The first national thanksgiving, however, was called in the year 1777 by the Continental Congress to thank to God for victory at the battle of Saratoga. Written by Sam Adams, it stated in part:

"Forasmuch as it is the indispensable duty of all men to adore the superintending providence of Almighty God; to acknowledge with gratitude their obligation to him for benefits received...

together with penitent confession of their sins, whereby they had forfeited every favor; and their humble and earnest supplications that it may please God through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of remembrance..

it is therefore recommended... to set apart Thursday the eighteenth day of December next, for solemn thanksgiving and praise, that with one heart and one voice the good people may express the grateful feeling of their hearts and consecrate themselves to the service of their Divine Benefactor... acknowledging with gratitude their obligations to Him for benefits received... to prosper the means of religion, for the promotion and enlargement of that kingdom which consisteth 'in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.'"¹⁸

The Continental Congress issued annual Thanksgiving Proclamations each year through 1784 when the war was finally over. In the first session of the Congress under the new Constitution, a resolution was given to President George Washington on September 25, 1789, indicating the will of Congress:

*"to wait upon the President of the United States to request that he would recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God...."*¹⁹

George Washington not only agreed, but made it his first official act of his administration, proclaiming:

"Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly implore His protection and favor...



I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26th day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the Beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be; that we may then unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country previous to their becoming a nation; for the signal and manifold mercies and the favorable interpositions of His providence in the course and conclusion of the late war..."

*"that we may unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations, and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions; to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually; to render our national government a blessing to all the people by constantly being a government of wise, just and constitutional laws..."*²⁰

¹⁸ See <http://festivals.iloveindia.com/thanks-giving/continental-congress/1777.html>

¹⁹ *Thanksgiving*, Federalist Edition #01-47, 20 November, 2001, page 5.

²⁰ See <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/GW/gw004.html>

Amazingly, no national proclamations took place until the time of the Civil War. It was Abraham Lincoln, who said he was converted to Christ while walking in the midst of the graves at Gettysburg, that proclaimed a national day of Thanksgiving for November 26, 1863.²¹

This proclamation fit more closely to giving God thanks for the harvest in the midst of the turmoil of the Civil War, and has been hailed as the true origin of our present Thanksgiving Day.

"The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God...

...Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense, have not arrested the plow, the shuttle or the ship; the ax has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore....

...No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People.

*I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union."*²²

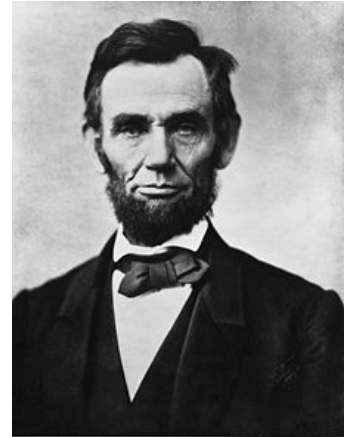
For 75 years following, annual Thanksgiving Days were proclaimed by every President. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in 1939, moved Thanksgiving one week earlier than the last in November out of pressure from merchants who wanted more time for Christmas. Congress, however, in 1941, disagreed, moving it back, permanently setting the fourth Thursday in November as a national day of Thanksgiving.

Conclusions

Merchants today often ignore Thanksgiving in order to prepare, not for honoring Christ's birth at Christmas, but rather to gain more time for selling material goods. The demand for gifts at Christmas has almost obliterated the source of our blessings. Our nation is in need of every one of the three thanksgivings we have noted here.

²¹ See *Thanksgiving*, Federalist #01-47, page 7.

^{1 22} Lincoln, Abraham, *Proclamation of Thanksgiving*, October 3, 1863; *Abraham Lincoln On-Line, Speeches and Writings*; <http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/thanks.htm>



(1) Restoring our National Thanksgiving Day

We need to restore the notion of giving thanks to the God of our forefathers, the God of the Bible, and the ruler of the Nations. In the midst of difficulty, the threat of terrorism and personal trials of all kinds, we must see the providential Hand of His provision, especially in the richest nation on earth.

It is time that we publicly acknowledged God without fear or apology. After all, it is His provision that has brought to the place of being the most prosperous nation on earth.

(2) Restoring Days of Prayer, Humiliation, Repentance, and giving of Thanks to God

The responsibility for calling days of fasting, prayer and humiliation (repentance for sin) falls on those who call themselves by His name, believers in Christ. Within the church and among the churches of a region, we should be calling these solemn assemblies.

We should be asking God to forgive us of the specific sins that have plagued our lives and our land. We must ask God for forgiveness and mercy from the Hand of a just and Sovereign God.

When any of these prayers are answered, authentic days of thanksgiving can be called to thank God for such blessings. This is our responsibility.

(3) It is a good thing to Give thanks To God

May we as Americans remember to give thanks to God for the blessings we enjoy. Forgetting the source of our blessings, and the source of our liberty, yields pride in ourselves alone.

As most public proclamations throughout our history have admonished us to humble ourselves before God, may we never become a nation of ungrateful people who think that by our hand alone we have achieved greatness, prosperity and military might. It is not the fact that we are Americans, but the fact that we have humbled ourselves enough to give thanks to God, from all races out of place of equality before His throne.

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." - Psalm 92:1

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Paul earned his B.A. in Mathematics from Barrington College in Rhode Island and his M.A. and D.E.D. in Education from Whitefield Theological Seminary in Lakeland, Florida in 1992 and 1994.

Paul has published books, articles and orations on history, church and youth leadership, Christian education and political statesmanship. Paul serves on various historical organizations and committees in Plymouth, Massachusetts. He also serves as historical consultant to *America's Hometown Thanksgiving Celebration* each year. (www.usathanksgiving.com)