

## Give Thanks To God

***“I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.” (Philemon 1:4-5)***

Have you ever found yourself sitting in the coffee shop or in a cafeteria where people are chatting mentioning names, complaining and grumbling against others? Or, you might be associating with a group who do such a practice – who enjoy to comment and name persons by certain critics of non-achievement, economic downfall or other certain faults in them. You might be involved already with such an act and become infected with such an attitude! Are your thoughts organized to the shortcoming of the human tongue? ***“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.” (James 3:9-10)***

The passage that we read today is part of Apostle Paul’s letter to a man named Philemon. He is a wealthy man whom Paul met and spoke about our Lord Jesus Christ – what He had done on the cross when He offered himself for us. For, ***“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)*** Indeed, Philemon accepted this good news, that Jesus died for him on the cross to give him eternal life. Philemon started to work for Jesus; he became a servant of God and his home became a place where the Church of God meets. In Philemon’s household there was a slave, his name is Onesimus, who had done some wrong and ran away from his master, Philemon. But he was caught and was put in the prison because of his wrong act. In the prison he met Paul who was also in the prison because he was persecuted for preaching the good news about Jesus. Yet, to Onesimus his presence in the jail had turned for good when he met Paul who spoke to him about the love of Jesus. He was told that he is a sinner but the Lord Jesus died for him on the cross to give him eternal life and life abundant if he believes in Him and follows Him. Onesimus accepted the Lord Jesus to be His Saviour and His Lord. His life was changed and he became a good person. As the time has come to leave the prison his older brother in the Lord, Paul, wrote to Onesimus’ master a letter to accept him again and to forgive him again and to forgive him of the wrongdoing he had done.

How beautiful is the attitude of Paul as he presented his request to Onesimus in the letter: ***“I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers.”*** This verse from the Bible represents the personality of Paul and that what God wants us to be. From the story about Onesimus it is expected that Philemon may not accept him again, and even if he receives him back and forgives him he may not consider him as a brother but a slave. For such an expectation we may hear comments from the people criticizing Philemon in a negative way, and expressing dissatisfaction with his possible decision not to receive back his previous slave or to receive him back but not to accept him as a brother in the Lord. But inspite of such an expectation Paul, the man with a wide vision and the man with open mind, he found still the opportunity to give thanks to God for the life of Philemon, as he wrote to him, ***“I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers.”***

God is teaching us today a new style of behaving and a higher standard of living as we are among large number of people in the society or among our brothers and sisters who have the same faith and belief in Jesus Christ as Apostle Paul, Philemon and Onesimus.

While looking upon any of the people around us, we should find something good in them that will make us give thanks to God for their lives. This does not mean that we over look offences or wicked acts, but to see the people around us in a more considerate way. We need to be more reasonable and practical in our approach to every people. We ought also to be less demanding toward them. The attitude of giving thanks to God for the life of the people around us must come from our faith in Jesus, that God is the one who created them and Jesus had forgiven their sins. God is even more blessed with us because of the people around we continually give Him thanks. Even if they are not reaching the level of our expectation, God the Creator can transform them and change them to a better person. Paul, in more than one occasion as we read in the Bible, gave thanks to God for the life of the people around him:

1. ***“I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.” (Ephesians 1:16)***
2. ***“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayer for all of you, I always pray with joy.” (Philippians 1:3-4)***
3. ***“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.” (Colossians 1:3)***
4. ***“We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor promoted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)***

As we notice, the Apostle Paul had always a reason to give thanks to God for the life of the brethren. Likewise Paul thanked God for Philemon for:

- A- ***His faith in the Lord Jesus:*** People who believe in Jesus Christ are a great blessing to us. Those who believe in His name they are a great support to us in this life.
- B- ***His love for the saints:*** The saints are the believers in Jesus who have dedicated their lives to serve Him. We give thanks to God for those who are doing good work for Jesus for they are God’s instruments to bring His grace to other people.

***My Dear and beloved:*** The Word of God to us is clear. It is a call for us to be changed from complaining and frustrate-feeling toward certain people; to be a thank-giver to God in our prayers. A call for us to be changed from being a grumbler to being a praise-giver; for God is pleased when His children appreciate His goodness. Let us then see the good thing in the lives of other people around us whom God created, and let us give thanks to the Lord as we pray: ***“Heavenly Father, thank You for your goodness and your faithfulness. Thank You, Lord, for Your word that gives me a good teaching of how to live peacefully. Thank You, Lord, for the life of the people around me. They are all great support and challenge to me to obey you more and more. They are sharing my burdens, encouraging me and comforting me in times of troubles. Thank You Lord for them and thank You Lord because you put them beside me. Teach me to be more thankful when I see them, Lord. This is my prayer in Jesus’ name, Amen.***