



## Got Gratitude?

**Colossians 2:6-7:** (NASB) *Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.*

### Special Guest: Tom Ruggirello

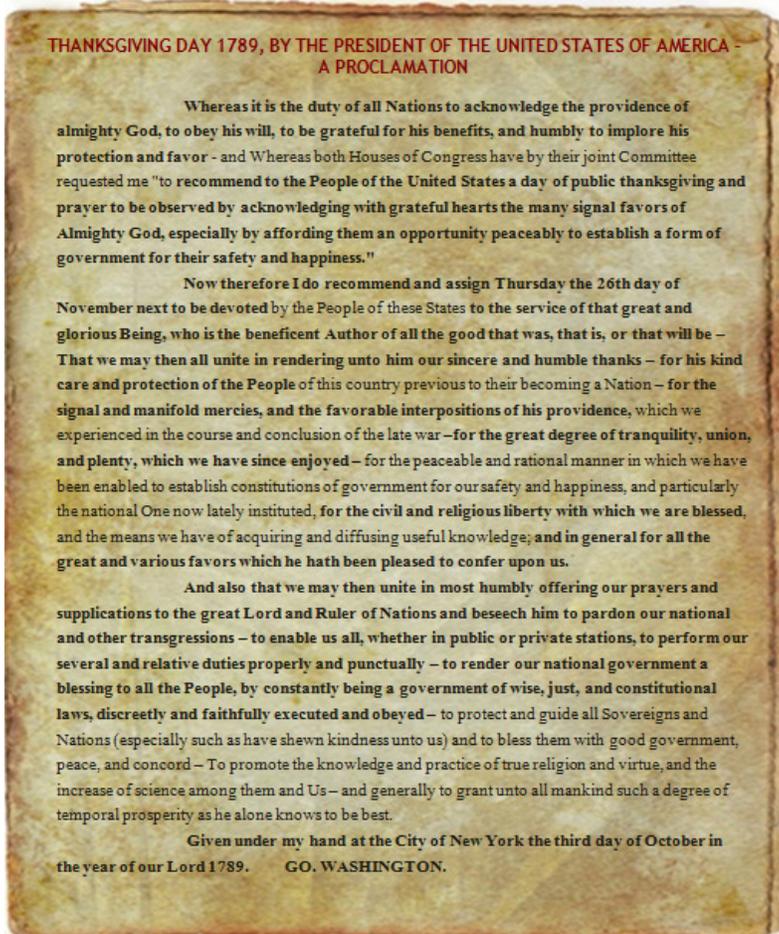
Thanksgiving! It is a word that for most conjures up images of a holiday - as a matter of fact, it was this past Thursday. It conjures up food, family and friends, it conjures up overeating, football, and a day off; and hopefully, it conjures up...well, hopefully it conjures up thanksgiving! You know, the act of giving thanks - the act of gratitude. Now, with that somewhat novel thought of actual gratitude in our minds, we need to focus on the recipient of this gratitude. Stay with us as we talk about true heart-felt gratitude and the life-changing results of giving such gratitude!



Thanksgiving is a truly American holiday that is put in place via Presidential Proclamation each year. As we look at the holiday now, it has changed significantly and that change is reflected in the Proclamations from year to year. To grasp the original meaning of the Thanksgiving holiday, let's go back to its roots...!



### "Battle Hymn of the Republic," Instrumental

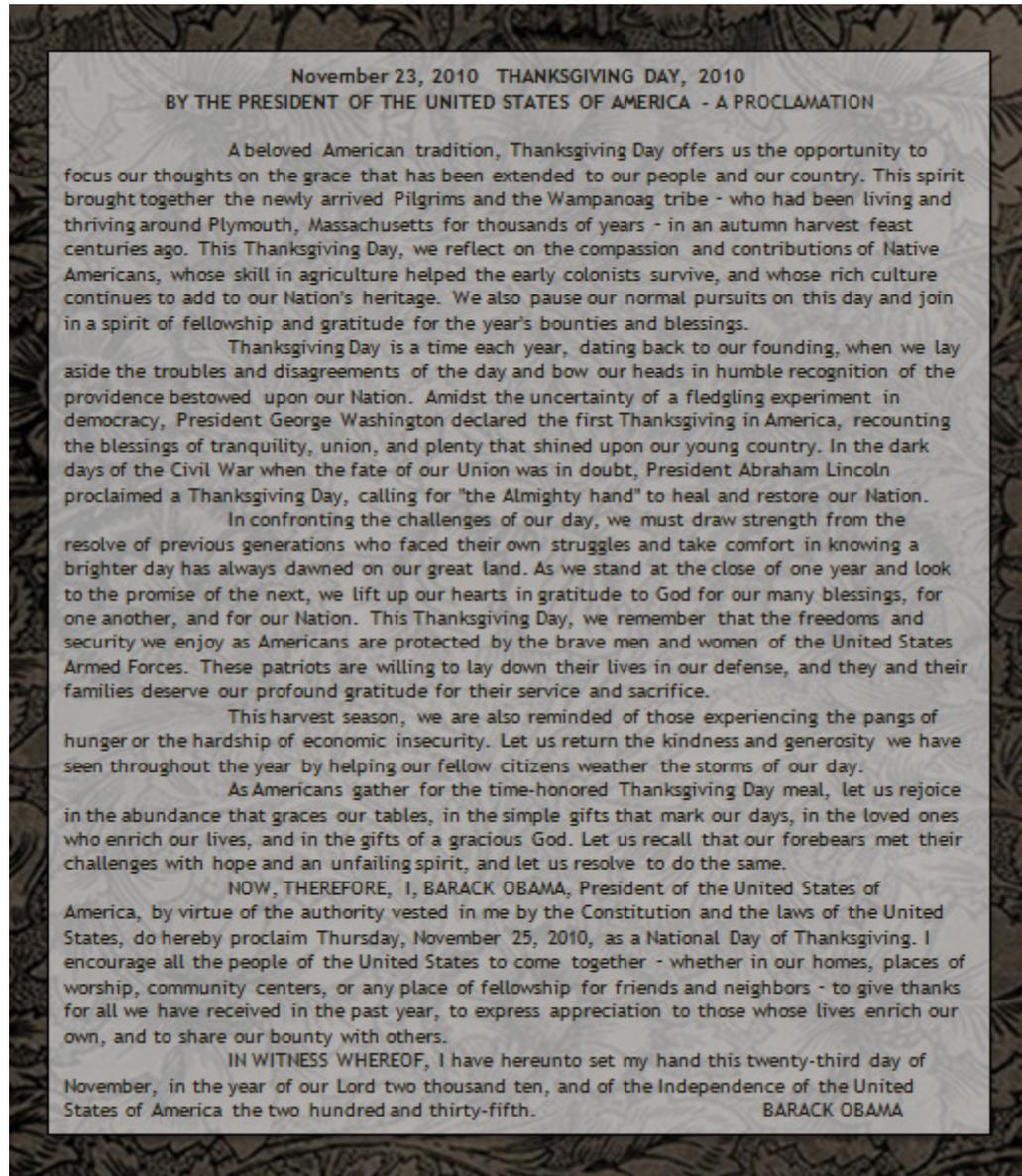


The original Presidential Proclamation given by George Washington in 1789.

Following American Tradition, President Obama issued the 2010 Proclamation this past week. While we won't take the time to read it, we note some important observations as we compare the two:

Washington's Proclamation got to the heart of what Thanksgiving was meant to be - it was completely filled with thanksgiving to God for the blessings and overruling providences at the birth of our nation.

Compared to the 2010 Proclamation, we see that it reflects where we have gone as a nation. We have become more secular and "politically correct." We have gradually taken God out of our country, and the statements reflect the general attitude of our country.



For example:

centuries ago. This Thanksgiving Day, we reflect on the compassion and contributions of Native Americans, whose skill in agriculture helped the early colonists survive, and whose rich culture continues to add to our Nation's heritage. We also pause our normal pursuits on this day and join in a spirit of fellowship and gratitude for the year's bounties and blessings.

This is right and good - we should reflect on the contributions of the Native Americans, but President Washington gave the gratitude to God.

one another, and for our Nation. This Thanksgiving Day, we remember that the freedoms and security we enjoy as Americans are protected by the brave men and women of the United States Armed Forces. These patriots are willing to lay down their lives in our defense, and they and their families deserve our profound gratitude for their service and sacrifice.

Again, it is appropriate to thank the men and women of our Armed Forces. But that is not what we see in Washington's Proclamation, or Lincoln's. These two presidents in particular were personally involved in two of the greatest military struggles our nation has ever experienced - the War of Independence and the Civil War. But at Thanksgiving, they didn't thank the military, they thanked



God. The America today has wandered away from thanking God for the blessings of our nation. It reflects the wealth and prosperity we have had for so long. Prosperous people often believe in their own ability to make prosperity.

..."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..."

*Abraham Lincoln's Proclamation of Thanksgiving, October 3, 1863*



**Gratitude is a discipline that we can learn to apply under any circumstance of life.**

A Christian has to choose gratitude and not just let it well up on its own.

Colossians 2:6-7: (NASB) *<sup>6</sup>Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, <sup>7</sup>having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.*

In our theme text, note that the Apostle Paul did not say to let your gratitude overflow only when things are going well. When we are young and strong and prosperous, we think things will never change. Paul's gratitude came from being firmly rooted in the Lord. The longer we are followers of Christ, the more appreciative and thankful we should be. Christian maturity should create that deeper understanding of the things for which we have to be grateful.

**How can we be thankful to God when we have painful or difficult experiences?** That's what makes this subject of thanksgiving difficult when life is difficult.

**What part does knowing the Gospel play in creating a thankful heart, even in trying circumstances?** We believe knowing the Gospel (the "Good News") makes all the difference. We have to really understand what that Good News is in order to really appreciate God. Young Christians or non-Christians might ask, "How can we give thanks to God when He hides Himself when trouble comes?" Part of the Gospel message is that there is a specific and necessary purpose for what God does. Only then can we begin to understand from God's perspective how thankfulness can be a part of our lives, even when we have trials. Part of the Good News is that there is good news behind the clouds of trouble. There is hope for a future in God's plan.

Hebrews 12:5-8: (Phillips) *...you have perhaps lost sight of that piece of advice which reminds you of our sonship in God: 'My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by him; for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives...No true son ever grows up uncorrected by his father. For if you had no experience of the correction which all sons have to bear you might well doubt the legitimacy of your sonship.*



When Adam sinned, God dealt with him as a father should. For his own good, God had to punish him - that's what good fathers are supposed to do. The fact that we are all descendents of Adam's, we share in that punishment. We are learning the results of sin, which are painful.

Psalms 103:2: (NASB) *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits;*

We are living under the Adamic curse. When we see why we are living under this curse, we can look at God's actions and be thankful for them. A good son, when he understands why his father is correcting him, eventually thanks his father for that correction.

Real happiness comes only from living under God's rules, and Adam and Eve did not understand that. The experience we have with sin today will be an invaluable help in choosing to obey God in the earthly Kingdom in the future.

Is thanksgiving a costly offering to God? That depends on your perspective. It can be just words. When thanksgiving is done right, there is a cost to it.

Whoever presents to the Lord real thanksgiving with lips of praise will follow his lip service with something more substantial.

Saying the right words is important, but living a life that reflects a grateful heart is the essence of gratitude.

Gratitude has to be anchored to God as the source of everything good, now and future. Understanding our relationship

The thing that awakens the deepest well of gratitude in a human being is that God has forgiven sin.

to Him as sinners is the well from which gratitude starts. When we sin, we have a recourse through the blood of Christ that covers our shortcomings.

  
"Blessed Assurance," Don Wigton

Many of you have probably heard of Fanny Crosby. She was a prolific writer of more than 8,000 hymns. In fact, her publishers resorted to using up to 100 different pen names to make her output more believable.

Fanny Crosby was blind. At six weeks of age she developed an infection in both eyes. Her regular family physician was not available, and the doctor who came in his place recommended that hot mustard plasters be placed over her eyes as treatment. That unfortunate procedure blinded Fanny for the rest of her life.

A short time later when she was only one-years old, her father died, so she was raised by her mother and grandmother. These women grounded Fanny in Christian principles, helping her to memorize long passages from the Bible.



At age 15, she enrolled in the New York Institute for the Blind where she learned to play the piano and guitar and to sing. Later she joined the faculty at that school, teaching English and history. In 1858, she married Alexander Van Alstyne, a blind musician and fellow teacher. They had one daughter, Francis, who died while a baby. She had a very difficult life in many ways, but you would never know that from her music.

Fanny Crosby wrote the words to such favorite hymns as

- "All the Way My Savior Leads Me"
- "Blessed Assurance"
- "Close to Thee"
- "Jesus Is Tenderly Calling You Home"
- "Near the Cross"
- "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior"
- "Safe in the Arms of Jesus"
- "Saviour, More Than Life to Me"
- "To God Be the Glory"
- "He Hideth My Soul," and many, many others

Imagine being able to say, as Fanny Crosby did, "I could not have written thousands of hymns if I had been hindered by the distractions of seeing all the interesting and beautiful objects that would have been presented to my notice...It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation."

"I thank him for the dispensation." How could she say that unless she disciplined herself to see the good in the difficult life of blindness? She learned gratitude in spite of her handicap.

This illustrates to us that gratitude can make an amazing difference. It is often the difference between wasting life's experiences or growing from them. Fanny Crosby chose to grow through them. She chose to be thankful and see the good in her experiences. Rather than harboring bitterness for the inept doctor who blinded her, or dwelling on her handicap and feeling sorry for herself, she wrote, "This is my story, this is my song, praising my savior all the day long."

Knowing the Lord and His plan can change the very way we look at life. Gratitude is a discipline to thank God even in the face of adversity. It is said: A grateful heart will be revealed and expressed by thankful words, while an unthankful heart will manifest itself in murmuring and complaining. We don't want to complain secretly in our hearts. We want to have a deeper

The greatest truth known to man is the existence of a supreme intelligent creator, even Jehovah God. For that greatest truth, we should have gratitude.

appreciation for all the things for which we have to be grateful. Listen to our own words - simply by listening to what we say, or don't say, we can know if we have grateful hearts.

Luke 6:44-45: (NASB) <sup>44</sup>For each tree is known by its own fruit.

<sup>45</sup>For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. <sup>45</sup>The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.

2 Corinthians 9:15: (KJV) Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. (The unspeakable gift is the life of Christ who paid the ransom that guarantees the future of mankind.)

Philippians 1:3: (KJV) I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

Ephesians 5:20: (KJV) Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;



Gratitude is more difficult if we don't have an understanding of God.

### Gratitude Towards God

The next story titled, "Never Give Up in Life," is about an athlete named Derek Redmond. He was a world class sprinter and was determined to finish a race despite a devastating injury. But the best part of the story is the father, demonstrating that helping his son was the most important thing he could do.



"You Raise Me Up," Josh Groban

A young man was favored to win the 400 meter race at the Barcelona Summer Olympics. However, disappointment came about 250 meters from the finish. His hamstring tore. He hobbled to a halt and fell to the ground in pain.

As stretcher bearers made their way over to him, he knew he had to decide. So, despite the pain, he stood up and began to hobble around the track. Suddenly a large man pushed through the crowd, fighting back security.

The man was his father.

"You don't have to do this," he told his weeping son. "Yes, I do," the son declared. "Well then," replied his dad. "we're going to finish this ...together."

The father wrapped his arms around his son and helped him hobble around the track. Shortly before the finish line the father let go of his son and the son completed the race with a standing ovation from the crowd of 65,000 people.



Photographed by: Gray Mortimore/ Getty Images

Derek Redmond may not have finished in first place, but he managed to finish his race.

Despite the pain, despite the tears... he determined to give his all...motivated by a love so strong of a father who picks him up when he falls.

What made the father do that? To leave the stands and meet his son on the track?

It was the pain on his child's face. His son was hurt,.. but he wanted to finish the race.

So the father came to help him finish.

God is like that.

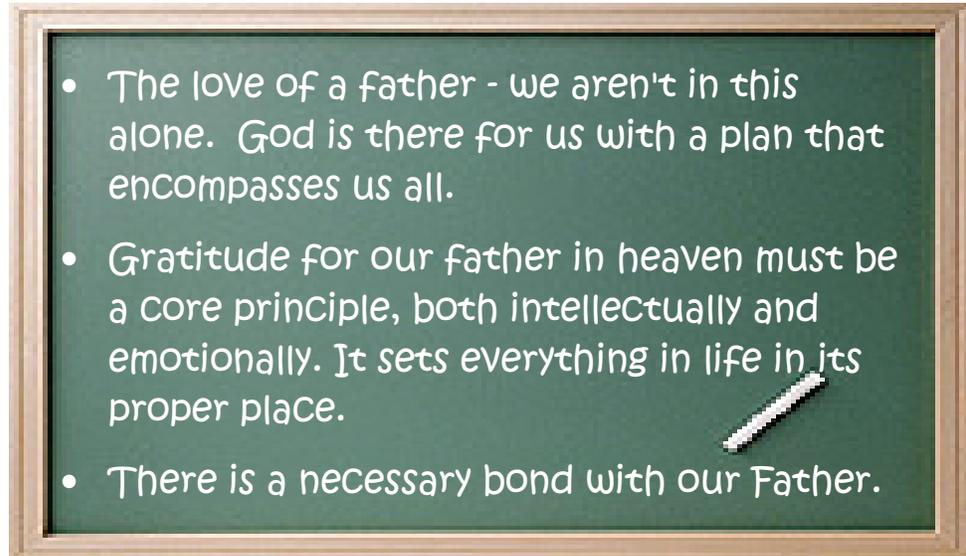
When we are hurting and fighting to finish, He comes and helps us.

How about you? How is your race? Are you in pain? Are you on the verge of quitting? God wants you to finish strong because He loves you. Will you open your heart to Him?

Please see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nifq3Ke2Q30>



## Lessons to Consider:



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

Daniel 2:19-23: (NASB) *<sup>19</sup>Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; <sup>20</sup>Daniel said, Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. <sup>21</sup>It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. <sup>22</sup>It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. <sup>23</sup>To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me wisdom and power; Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, for You have made known to us the king's matter.*

Daniel realized that even though he didn't understand what was going on, he understood that God had everything under control, and there would be a time and season for God's plan to work out for Israel. He trusted God's wisdom.

### Gratitude in the Depths of Pain and Trial



#### "With This Love - Choir," Peter Gabriel

A church group from New Bern, North Carolina, had traveled to the Caribbean on a missionary trip. The conditions at the posh, luxury resorts are a far cry from the impoverished way of life endured by many others on these tropical islands.

During this particular trip, their host took the group to visit a leper colony on the island of Tobago. And while there, they held a worship service in the campus chapel. As you can imagine, the sight of emaciated lepers filing into their seats on the bare pews bore deeply into the minds and memories of each visitor to this unaccustomed scene.

But no memory left its mark like this one:

When the pastor announced, "We have time for one more hymn. Does anyone have a favorite," he noticed a lone patient seated awkwardly on the back row, facing away from the front. At this final call for hymn requests, with great effort, the woman slowly turned her body in the pastor's direction.



"Body" would perhaps be a generous description of what remained of hers. No nose. No lips. Just bare teeth, askew within a chalky skull. She raised her boney nub of an arm (no hand) to see if she might be called on to appeal for her favorite song to be sung. Her teeth moved to the croaking rhythm of her voice as she said, "Could we sing 'Count Your Many Blessings?'"

The pastor stumbled out of the pulpit, out the door, and into the adjoining yard, tears raining down his face. One of the traveling party rushed to fill his place, beginning to sing the familiar song in this unfamiliar place, arguably the most "unblessed" of any spot in the universe.

A friend hustled outside, put his arm around the sobbing pastor, and consolingly said, "I'll bet you'll never be able to sing that song again, will you?"

"Yeah, I'll sing it," the pastor answered, "but never the same way, ever again."

Leave it to the grotesquely deformed leper to remind us that grateful people are characterized by grateful words, while ungrateful people are given to griping, complaining, murmuring, whining.

Some grumble at why God put thorns on roses, while others wisely notice - with awe and gratitude - that God has put roses among thorns. Hear what people are saying when they talk about the everyday events of their lives, and you will see in an instant the difference between gratitude and ingratitude. This poor leper woman found room in her heart for thanksgiving to God. Through the darkness of a debilitating disease she found a way to count her blessings.

Psalms 69:30: (NASB) *I will praise the name of God with song and magnify Him with thanksgiving.*

### Lessons to Consider:

- The antidote for negativity and murmuring is the magnifying glass of thanksgiving!
- Gratitude makes God larger and more real to our thinking than the problem or obstacle we face! The question is what are we magnifying?
- Grateful people are characterized by grateful words, while ungrateful people are given to griping, complaining, murmuring, whining.
- Some grumble at why God put thorns on roses, while others wisely notice - with awe and gratitude - that God has put roses among thorns. (Perspective!)





It is a valuable exercise to make lists of the things for which we are grateful, and continue to add to the list. Include even the smallest things. Let's not forget the story of Jesus healing the ten lepers, where only one of the ten returned to say thank you. That was a conscious decision on the part of that one, and we also need to continually be thankful for what has been given to us.

**1 Thessalonians 5:18:** *In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

There is blessing in every circumstance even if it is just for having life. Gratitude is often an act of faith, because we do not understand why things happen in our lives. We can still trust Him.

**Psalms 28:7:** *The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise Him.*

**Gratitude in Tragedy**



**"It is Well With My Soul," Don Wigton**



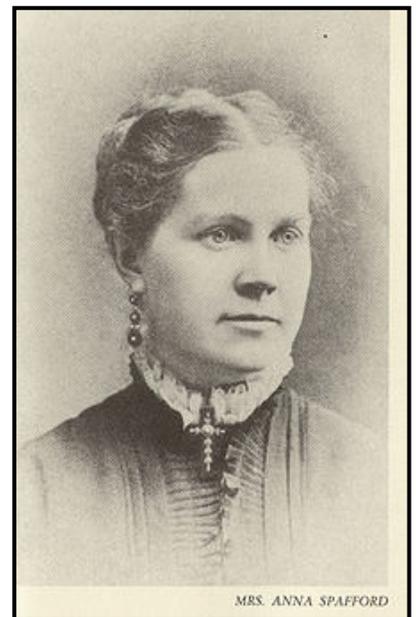
Horatio Spafford was a 43-year old lawyer. He lived in a north side suburb of Chicago with his wife Anna and his five children. In 1871, his only son died. A few months later the great Chicago fire of 1871 consumed Spafford's real estate investments. He lost his entire life's savings. Two years later Spafford and his family decided to take a vacation to Europe. However, Spafford was delayed by last minute business. He sent his wife and four daughters on the S.S. Du Havre as scheduled, promising to follow in a few days.

On November 2, 1873, the 'Ville de Havre' had collided with 'The Lochearn', an English vessel. It sank in only 12 minutes, claiming the lives of 226 people. Anna Spafford had stood bravely on the deck with her daughters Annie, Maggie, Bessie and Tanetta clinging desperately to her. They were eleven, nine, five, and two years old. Her last memory had been of her baby being torn violently from her arms by the force of the waters. Anna was only saved from the fate of her daughters by a plank which floated beneath her unconscious body and propped her up. When the survivors of the wreck had been rescued, Mrs. Spafford's first reaction was one of

complete despair. Then she heard a voice speak to her, "You were spared for a purpose." And she immediately recalled the words of a friend, **"It's easy to be grateful and good when you have so much, but take care that you are not a fair-weather friend to God."**

When the survivors landed in Europe, Anna Spafford cabled her husband, "Saved alone, what shall I do?"

Upon hearing the terrible news, Horatio Spafford boarded the next ship out of New York to join his bereaved wife. Bertha Spafford (the fifth daughter of Horatio and Anna born later) explained that during her father's voyage, the captain of the ship had called him to the bridge. "A careful reckoning has been made," he said, "and I believe we are now passing the place where the de Havre was wrecked.





The water is three miles deep." Horatio then returned to his cabin and penned the lyrics of his great hymn, "It Is Well With My Soul."

In spite of their tragedy, in 1881 the Spaffords moved to Jerusalem to meet the needs of the people. Through their service, the Spaffords were able to share Christ with the local Muslim and Jewish communities.

The words which Spafford wrote that day come from 2 Kings 4:26. They echo the response of the Shunammite woman to the sudden death of her only child. Though we are told "her soul is vexed within her," she still maintains that "It is well." And Spafford's song reveals a man whose trust in the Lord is as unwavering as hers.

Please see: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8\\_EfDqF7YI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8_EfDqF7YI)

It would be very difficult for any of us to predict how we would react under circumstances similar to those experienced by the Spaffords. But we do know that the God who sustained them would also be with us.

No matter what circumstances overtake us may we be able to say with Horatio Spafford:

**It Is Well with My Soul**  
 Horatio G. Spafford, 1873      VILLE DU HAVRE      Philip P. Bliss, 1876

1. When peace, like a riv - er at - tend - eth my way,    When sor - rows like  
 2. Though Sa - tan should buf - fet, tho' tri - als should come,    Let this blest as -  
 3. My sin - O the bliss of this glo - ri - ous thought,    My sin - not in  
 4. And, Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,    The clouds be rolled

**"When peace like a river, attendeth my way,  
 When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
 Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
 It is well, it is well with my soul.  
 Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
 Let this blest assurance control,  
 That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,  
 And hath shed his own blood for my soul!  
 It is well...with my soul!  
 It is well, it is well, with my soul."**

soul, with my soul,    It is well, it is well with my soul.



Seeing life's experiences from God's perspective is important in building future faith. The Spafford's weren't overwhelmed by their grief, in spite of their immediate circumstances.

**Let's take a closer look at the passages referenced by Mr. Spafford:**

**2 Kings 4:1-40:** (NAS) <sup>1</sup>Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear Jehovah: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two children to be bondmen. <sup>2</sup>And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me; what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thy handmaid hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil. <sup>3</sup>Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbors', even empty vessels; borrow not a few. <sup>4</sup>And thou shalt go in, and shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and pour out into all those vessels; and thou shalt set aside that which is full. <sup>5</sup>So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons; they brought the vessels to her, and she poured out. <sup>6</sup>And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. <sup>7</sup>Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy sons of the rest. <sup>8</sup>And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. <sup>9</sup>And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God, that passeth by us continually. <sup>10</sup>Let us make, I pray thee, a little chamber on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a seat, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither. <sup>11</sup>And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber and lay there. <sup>12</sup>And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him. <sup>13</sup>And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people. <sup>14</sup>And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no son, and her husband is old. <sup>15</sup>And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door. <sup>16</sup>And he said, At this season, when the time cometh round, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thy handmaid. <sup>17</sup>And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season, when the time came round, as Elisha had said unto her. <sup>18</sup>And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. <sup>19</sup>And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to his servant, Carry him to his mother. <sup>20</sup>And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. <sup>21</sup>And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out. <sup>22</sup>And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the servants, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again. <sup>23</sup>And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? it is neither new moon nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well. <sup>24</sup>Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slacken me not the riding, except I bid thee. <sup>25</sup>So she went, and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is the Shunammite: <sup>26</sup>run, I pray thee, now to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well. <sup>27</sup>And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came near to thrust her away; but the man of God said, Let her alone: for her soul is vexed within her; and Jehovah hath hid it from me, and hath not told me. <sup>28</sup>Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me? <sup>29</sup>Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thy hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child. <sup>30</sup>And the mother of the child said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her. <sup>31</sup>And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he returned to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked. <sup>32</sup>And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. <sup>33</sup>He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto Jehovah. <sup>34</sup>And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his

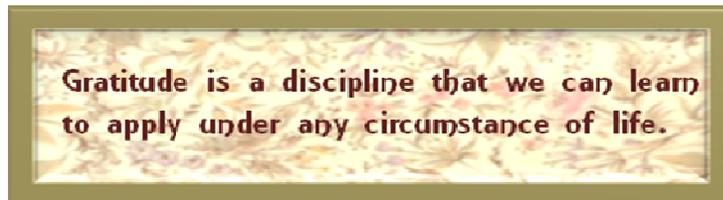


eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon him; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. <sup>35</sup>Then he returned, and walked in the house once to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. <sup>36</sup>And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. <sup>37</sup>Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground; and she took up her son, and went out. <sup>38</sup>And Elisha came again to Gilgal. And there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and boil pottage for the sons of the prophets. <sup>39</sup>And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage; for they knew them not. <sup>40</sup>So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof.

The prophet Elisha promised this woman her son in spite of her not being able to have children for a long time. When the son died, she was determined to go back and find Elisha. When her husband asked her what she was doing, her answer to him was, "It will be well." She knew Elisha could raise her son, and when she found Elisha, *that's* when she said, "It is well." There is the connection between her faith and her hope - it was her faith in the goodness of God expressed through Elisha that things would be well again. Elisha raised her child from the dead.

So that's the power of the God we are dealing with. When we believe as the Shunammite woman did and as Horatio Spafford did, we can say in our own experiences of life that it IS well in our soul, even though we don't understand it all at the moment, we can trust in God because He is wise and good.

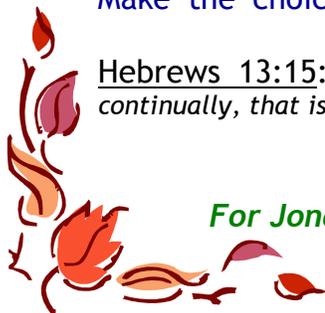
In summary, gratitude has to be a core element of our lives. In order for that to be, we have to keep reminding ourselves with whom we are dealing. Remember:



This is very important - especially when the circumstances of life are painful and difficult. It is important to have the context of God's plan in order to have a foundation that we have a lot to be thankful for to God - not only in this life, but in the eternal life to come.

Make the choice to give gratitude to God for your life and your blessings.

Hebrews 13:15: (KJV) *By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*



**...So got gratitude?  
For Jonathan and Rick (...and Tom!) and Christian Questions,  
Think about it...!**