

REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

In Gratitude

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Have you ever considered the sin of ingratitude? That question might freeze us in our tracks. The “sin of ingratitude”? Is ingratitude a sin? Our Westminster Shorter Catechism tells us that sin is “any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.”

That is how we define a “sin” – it is contrary to God’s law – it is lawlessness.

In the Psalms, we often find David expressing his gratitude to God for protection and provision,

for safety and for comfort. King David was a thankful person, and an excellent example of deep gratitude. But the Psalms go beyond simply modeling thankfulness. There are numerous places where we are exhorted and commanded to express our gratitude. One example is Psalm 118:1 *Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.* In other places we are reminded of the propriety of giving thanks, like Psalm 92:1 *It is good to give thanks to the LORD And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;*

In view of who God is, what He has done, and how we have benefited from His grace and mercy, we ought always to give thanks. Paul exhorts his readers to this attitude in Ephesians 5:20 *always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;*

So it stands to reason that a posture

of ingratitude that refuses to give thanks to God is properly and rightly sin against God. And this is a typical mark of the unbeliever who is given over to sin. In Romans 1:21 Paul writes about the unbelieving “*For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*”



Dr. Albert Mohler observes from this verse that the refusal to give thanks is

at the very heart of the fall, and at the heart of human sinfulness. He then suggests that ingratitude is the most fundamental of all sins. “Ingratitude is the primal problem of humanity from Genesis 3 forward,” he states. Every account of human sinfulness is an account of ingratitude to the gracious God who created and sustains us.

This insight helps us to evaluate many things correctly. First, it helps us to properly assess how fallen humanity operates, and the depth and breadth of their sinfulness. Every single time evil is transacted by a human being, it expresses wicked ingratitude to the Maker of all flesh. Fallen men shake their fists in God’s face, rather than kneeling in humble thanks before His throne.

It is particularly helpful for reviewing our own choices and actions. When we

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Mnemonics...

- *Bowling and Pizza Party, December 27th*

Women's Presbyterial, Indian Head Park, IL, October 6th 2018

By Carla DeMaster and Lynn Jensema



One of the purposes of the Midwest Presbyterial is to know, support, and encourage missionaries of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Our speaker, David Nakla, helped us to do just that. The women of Westminster OPC in Indian Head Park did much of the planning of hosting for the meeting. The officers, Pat Martens, Jennifer De Ru, and Lynn Jensema planned the program. Seven went from Sheboygan with Lynn driving and Audrey, Gail, Ellen, Phyllis, Dorothy and myself appreciating her skill and smooth maneuvering.

David helped us visualize what a refugee is by looking in the Bible for synonyms: strangers, alien, sojourner, and cities of refuge. Many people in the Bible were mentioned; Moses, David, Hagar, Jacob, Joseph, Paul, Ishmael, and Israel in Egypt. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus had to flee for refuge.

The UN says there are 44,400 people driven from their homes each day. 40,000 are displaced in their own countries. Some of the countries having refugees are Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, and South Somalia. Nearer to us are Venezuela, and other South American countries.

Our Lord teaches us to love our neighbors, do good to everyone. We are to love because the Lord loves us. The command to not give into fear is repeated 365 times. We are to love the stranger.

The history of refugees from 1941 on is something like this: 1941: Jewish refugees, 1950s: Koreans, 1970s: Ugandans, 1980: Boat people from VietNam, Cambodia, 1993: Gutana, Sudan, 1999: North Koreans, Eritreans, Sudan.

How can we help?

The local church: the ideal way by Word and deed.

What are the challenges? Language, culture, migrants coming and going; traumatized people.

We should open our doors to refugees. We tend to be unwelcoming. Some have never been in an American home for the first 5 years they are here. This is a special form of foreign missions and we don't need to leave the country. These people have significant and legitimate needs.

Start small. Take opportunities. Get church leaders involved. Trust the Lord for financial, material, time, and people involvement. We can't respond to everyone. Treat recipients as individuals. Find meaningful work for the men.

Thus was the challenge of the morning session. The afternoon presented short term missions and disaster relief. Watch for that report by Lynn next.

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Women's Presbyterial Continued....

The ladies of the Women's Presbyterial of the Midwest were blessed to be able to hear from David Nakhla on October 6th at Westminster OPC in Indianhead Park, IL. Carla DeMaster has written a synopsis of the morning session--here's a synopsis of the afternoon session.

- Session 2: "An Overview of the Work and Impact of Disaster Response Efforts"
- OPC Short Term Missions, 2017 (find these and more opportunities at OPCSTM.org)
- Boardwalk Chapel since 1940's in New Jersey
- Czech Republic - camp 2 of last 3 years
- Uruguay - English Camp
- Quebec - English for Kids Bible Camp
- Haiti - VBS
- Key West, FL with Bill Welzien
- Team Praha - 3 weeks in Czech Republic
- Team Utah
- Venture Mission - Zoar, WI

OPC Disaster Response - defined "Major Disaster" - natural disaster affecting tens of thousands of people such as:

- 2005 - Hurricane Katrina, this was a wake-up call for the OPC (\$450,000 donated)
- 2010 - Earthquake in Haiti, this was when David started his current position (\$375,000 donated)
- 2011 - Tsunami in Japan (\$600,000 donated)
- 2012 - Hurricane Sandy (\$180,000 donated)
- 2017 - Hurricanes Harvey (TX), Irma (FL, PR), and Maria (PR) (\$670,000 donated)
- 2018 - Hurricane Florence (NC) just beginning to gather info/needs

The process that takes place when a major disaster hits is as follows:

- Meet with area church leaders & servants and ready them to deal with disaster and mobilize them to serve/act in their area
- There is a Site coordinator, Volunteer coordinator, Hospitality coordinator, and Regional Response Coordinator put in place

Disasters after the disaster include:

- unneeded clothes and water sent (they have nowhere to go with these donations, so they pile up in parking lots)
- people just showing up "to help" (they need to contact the Volunteer coordinator). Those in need don't even know where to start, so please don't add to the frustration by just showing up.

David pointed out that some of the funds donated for a particular disaster are unable to be used for various reasons. For example, the OPC was only able to use \$75,000 of the \$375,000 donated for Haiti in 2010. They now have a policy in place to repurpose those funds for various diaconal needs. They are kept in the OPC, but may not be needed for the particular disaster for which they were designated.

To keep up with the work of the OPC and major disasters going on in different areas where we do or don't have churches, please visit OPCSTM.org and sign up for "The S.T.O.R.M. Report" email.

It was a wonderful day with our OPC sisters from the Presbytery of the Midwest. Ladies, may we see you there next year at Bethel OPC in Oostburg!

Don't Be a Scrooge This Christmas

By R.C. Sproul



"Bah! Humbug!" These two words are instantly associated with Charles Dickens' immortal fictional anti-hero, Ebenezer Scrooge. Scrooge was the prototype of the Grinch who stole Christmas, the paradigm of all men cynical.

We all recognize that Ebenezer Scrooge was a mean person - stingy, insensitive, selfish, and unkind. What we often miss in our understanding of his character is that he was preeminently profane. "Bah! Humbug!" was his Victorian use of profanity.

Not that any modern editor would feel the need to delete Scrooge's expletives. His language is not the standard currency of cursing. But it was profane in that Scrooge demeaned what was holy. He trampled on the sanctity of Christmas. He despised the sacred. He was cynical toward the sublime.

Christmas is a holiday, indeed the world's most joyous holiday. It is called a "holiday" because the day is holy. It is a day when businesses close, when families gather, when churches are filled, and when soldiers put down their guns for a 24-hour truce. It is a day that differs from every other day.

Every generation has its abundance of Scrooges. The church is full of them. We hear endless complaints of commercialism. We are constantly told to put Christ back into Christmas. We hear that the tradition of Santa Claus is a sacrilege. We listen to those acquainted with history murmur that Christmas isn't biblical. *The Church invented Christmas to compete with the ancient Roman festival honoring the bull-god Mithras*, the nay-sayers complain. Christmas? *A mere capitulation to paganism.*

And so we rain on Jesus' parade and assume an Olympian detachment from the joyous holiday. All this carping is but a modern dose of Scroogeism, our own sanctimonious profanation of the holy.

Sure, Christmas is a time of commerce. The department stores are decorated to the hilt, the ad pages of the newspapers swell in size, and we tick off the number of shopping days left until Christmas. But why all the commerce? The high degree of commerce at Christmas is driven by one thing: the buying of gifts for others. To present our friends and families with gifts is not an ugly, ignoble vice. It incarnates the amorphous "spirit of Christmas." The tradition rests ultimately on the supreme gift God has given the world. God so loved the world, the Bible says, that He gave His only begotten Son. The giving of gifts is a marvelous response to the receiving of such a gift. For one day a year at least, we taste the sweetness inherent in the truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

What about putting Christ back into Christmas? It is simply not necessary. Christ has never left Christmas. "Jingle Bells" will never replace "Silent Night." Our holiday once known as Thanksgiving is rapidly becoming known simply as "Turkey Day." But Christmas is still called Christmas. It is not called "Gift Day." Christ is still in Christmas, and for one brief season the secular world broadcasts the message of Christ over every radio station and television channel in the land. Never does the church get as much free air

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Don't Be a Scrooge Continued....

time as during the Christmas season.

Not only music but the visual arts are present in abundance, bearing testimony to the historic significance of the birth of Jesus. Christmas displays all remind the world of the sacred Incarnation.

Doesn't Santa Claus paganize or at least trivialize Christmas? He's a myth, and his very mythology casts a shadow over the sober historical reality of Jesus. Not at all. Myths are not necessarily bad or harmful. Every society creates myths. They are a peculiar art form invented usually to convey a message that is deemed important by the people. When a myth is passed off as real history, that is fraud. But when it serves a different purpose it can be healthy and virtuous. Kris Kringle is a mythical hero, not a villain. He is pure fiction — but a fiction used to illustrate a glorious truth.

What about the historical origins of Christmas as a substitute for a pagan festival? I can only say, good for the early Christians who had the wisdom to flee from Mithras and direct their zeal to the celebration of the birth of Christ. Who associates Christmas today with Mithras? No one calls it “Mithrasmus.”

We celebrate Christmas because we cannot eradicate from our consciousness our profound awareness of the difference between the sacred and the profane. Man, in the generic sense, has an incurable propensity for marking sacred space and sacred time. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, the ground that was previously common suddenly became uncommon. It was now holy ground - sacred space. When Jacob awoke from his midnight vision of the presence of God, he anointed with oil the rock upon which he had rested his head. It was sacred space.

When God touches earth, the place is holy. When God appears in history, the time is holy. There was never a more holy place than the city of Bethlehem, where the Word became flesh. There was never a more holy time than Christmas morning when Emmanuel was born. Christmas is a holiday. It is the holiest of holy days. We must heed the warning of Jacob Marley: “Don't be a Scrooge” at Christmas.



John Ploughman

Chapter 13: Home

That word "home" always sounds like poetry to me. It rings like a peal of bells at a wedding only more soft and sweet, and it chimes deeper into the ears of my heart. It does not matter whether it means thatched cottage or manor house: home is home, be it ever so homely, and there's no place on earth like it. May green grow the houseleek on the roof forever, and let the moss flourish on the thatch. Sweetly the sparrows chirrup and the swallows twitter around the chosen spot which is my joy and rest. Every bird loves its own nest; the owl thinks the old ruins are the fairest spot under the moon, and the fox is of opinion that his hole in the hill is remarkably cozy. When my master's nag knows that his head is towards home, he needs no whip but thinks it best to put on all steam; and I am always of the same mind, for the way home to me is the best bit of road in the country. I like to see the smoke out of my own chimney better than the fire on another many hearth; there's something so beautiful in the way it curls up among the trees. Cold potatoes on my own table taste better than roast meat at my neighbors, and the honeysuckle at my own door is the sweetest I ever smell. When you are out, friends do their best, but still it is not home. "Make yourself at home," they say, because everybody knows that to feel at home is to feel at ease,

"East and west
Home is best."

Why, at home you are at home, and what more do want? Nobody begrudges you, whatever your appetite may be; and you don't get put into a damp bed. Safe in his own castle, like a king in his palace, a man feels himself somebody and is not afraid of being thought proud for thinking so. Every cock may crow on his own dunghill, and a dog is a lion when he is at home. A sweep is master inside his own door. No need to guard every word because some enemy is on the watch, no keeping the heart under lock and key; but as soon as the door is shut, it is liberty hall with none to peep and pry. There is a glorious view from the top of Leith Hill in our dear old Surrey; and Hindhead, and Martha's Chapel, and Boxhill are not to be sneezed at; but I could show you something which to mind beats them all for real beauty. I mean John Ploughman's cottage with the kettle boiling on the hob, singing like an unfallen black angel, while the cat is lying asleep in front of the fire, the wife sits in her chair mending stockings, and the children are cutting about the room as full of fun as young lambs. It is a singular fact perhaps some of you will doubt it, but that is your unbelieving nature—that our little ones are real beauties, always a pound or two plumper than others of their age, and yet it doesn't tire you half so much to nurse them as it does other people's babies. Why, bless you, my wife would tire out in half the time if her neighbor had asked her to see to a strange youngster, but her own children don't seem to exhaust her at all. Now my belief is that it all comes of their having been born at home. Just so is it with everything else: our lane is the most beautiful for twenty miles around because our home is in it; and my garden is a perfect paradise, for no other particular reason than this very good one that it belongs to the old house at home.

I cannot make out why so many working men spend their evenings at the public house, when their own fireside would be so much better and cheaper, too. There they sit, hour after hour, boozing and talking nonsense, and forgetting the dear good souls at home who are half-starved and weary with waiting for them. Their money goes into the innkeeper's till when it ought to make their wives and children comfortable. As for the beer they get, it is just so much fools' milk to drown their wits in. Such fellows ought to be horsewhipped, and those who encourage them and live on their spendings deserve to feel the butt end of the whip. Those bars are the curse of this country: no good can ever come of them, and the evil they do no tongue can tell. The inns were bad enough, but the bars are a pest; I wish the man who made the law to open them had to keep all the families that they have brought to ruin. Bars are the enemies of home, and therefore the sooner their licenses are taken away the better. Poor men don't need such places, nor rich men either: they are all the

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Ploughman Continued....

worse and none the better. Anything that hurts the home is a curse and ought to be hunted down as gamekeepers do the rennin in the forests.

Husbands should try to make home happy and holy. It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest and a bad man who makes his home wretched. Our house ought to be a little church with holiness to the Lord over the door, but it ought never to be a prison where there is plenty of rule and order, but little love and no pleasure. Married life is not all sugar, but grace in the heart will keep away most of the sour. Godliness and love can make a man, like a bird in a hedge, sing among thorns and briars, and set others singing too. It should be the husband's pleasure to please his wife, and the wife's care to care for her husband. He is kind to himself who is kind to his wife. I am afraid some men live by the rule of self, and when that is the case, home happiness is a mere sham. When husbands and wives are well yoked, how light their load becomes! It is not every couple that is a such a pair, and more's the pity. In a true home all the strife is who can do the most to make the family happy. A home should be a Bethel, not a Babel. The husband should be the "houseband," binding together like a cornerstone, but not crushing everything like a millstone. Unkind and domineering husbands ought not to pretend to be Christians, for they act totally contrary to Christ's commands. Yet a home must be well ordered, or it will become a Bedlam and a scandal to the parish. If the father drops the reins, the family coach will soon be in the ditch. A wise mixture of love and firmness will do it, but neither harshness nor softness alone will keep home in happy order.

Home is no home where the children are not in obedience; it is rather a pain than a pleasure to be in it. Happy is he who is happy in his children, and happy are the children who are happy in their father. All fathers are not wise. Some are like Eli, and spoil their children. Not to cross our children is the way to make a cross of them. Those who never give their children the rod must not wonder if their children become a rod to them. Solomon says, "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight to thy soul." I am not clear that anybody wiser than Solomon lives in our time, though some think they are. Young colts must be broken in or they will make wild horses. Some fathers are all fire and fury, filled with passion at the smallest fault; this is worse than the other and makes home a little hell instead of a heaven. No wind makes the miller idle, but too much upsets the mill altogether. Men who strike in their anger generally miss their mark. When God helps us to hold the reins firmly but not to hurt the horses' mouths, all goes well. When home is ruled according to God's word, angels might be asked to stay the night with us, and they would not find themselves out of their element.

Wives should feel that home is their place and their kingdom, the happiness of which depends mostly upon them. she is a wicked wife who drives her husband away by her sharp tongue. A man said to his wife the other day, "Double up your whip." He meant keep your tongue quiet: it is wretched living with such a whip always lashing you. When God gave to men ten measures of speech, they say the women ran away with nine, and in some cases I am afraid the saying is true. A dirty, slatternly, gossiping wife is enough to drive her husband mad; and if he goes to the public house on occasion, she is the cause of it. It is doleful living where the wife, instead of reverencing her husband, is always wrangling and railing at him. It must be a good thing when such women are hoarse, and it is a pity that they have not so many blisters on their tongues as they have teeth in their jaws. God save us all from wives who are angels in the streets, saints in the church, and devils at home. I have never tasted of such bitter herbs, but I pity from my very heart those who have this diet every day of their lives.

Show me a loving husband, a worthy wife, and good children, and no pair of horses that ever flew along road could take me in a year where I could see a more pleasing sight. Home is the grandest of all institutions. Talk about parliament, but give me a quiet little parlor. Boast about voting and the Reform Bill if you like, but I go in for weeding the little garden and teaching the children their hymns. Franchise may be very fine thing, but I should a good deal sooner get mortgage to my cottage, if I could find the money to buy it. Magna Charta I don't know much about, but if it means a quiet home for everybody, three cheers for it. I wish our governors would not break up so many poor men's homes by that abominably heartless poor law. It is far more fitting for mad dogs than for Englishmen. A Hampshire cart driver told me the other day that his wife and children were all in the government union house and his home broken up, because of the cruel working of the poor law. He

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Ploughman Continued....

had eight little ones and his wife to keep on nine shillings a week, with rent to pay out of it; on this he could not keep body and soul together. Now, if the parish had allowed him a mere trifle, a loaf or two and a couple of shillings a week, he would have jogged on, but no, not a penny out of the house. They might all die of starvation unless they would all go into the workhouse. So with many bitter tears and heartaches, the poor soul had to sell his few little bits of furniture, and he is now a homeless man. And yet he is a good hard-working fellow and had served one master for nearly twenty years.

Such things are very common, but they ought not to be. Why cannot the really deserving poor have a little help given them? Why must they be forced into the union house? Home is the pillar of the British Empire, and ought not to be knocked to pieces by these unchristian laws. I wish I was an orator and could talk politics. I would not care a rush for the Whigs or Tories, but I would stand up like a lion for the poor man's home, which, let me tell the Lords and Commons, is as dear to him as their great palaces are to them, and sometimes dearer.

If I had no home, the world would be a big prison to me. England for me a country, Surrey for a county, and for a village give me no, I shan't tell you, or you will be hunting John Ploughman up. Many of my friends have emigrated and are breaking up fresh soil in Australia and America. Though their stone has rolled, I hope they gather moss, for when they were at home they were like the sitting hen which gets no barley. Really these hard times make a man think of his wings, but I am tied by the leg to my own home, and, please God, I hope to live and die among my own people. They may do things better in France and Germany, but old England is for me after all.

Milwaukee Rescue Mission

We are again collecting donations for the Milwaukee Rescue Mission through the end of the year. Place any of your donations in the boxes provided near the entrance. Thank you!



December Birthdays

Heidi Mamazza	3rd	Holly Froh	26th
Sue Lorenz	3rd	Dorothy Wingard	27th
John TenPas	7th	Darlene Cooper	30th
Robert Boss	13th		
Conner Froh	14th		
Darryl Harmelink	14th		
Grace De Jong	20th		
Marshall Ver Velde	22nd		



December Anniversaries

Brian & Dorothy Wingard
~December 11th~

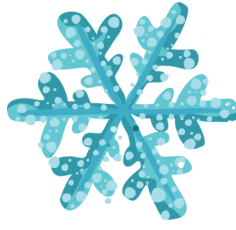
Ivan & Carla De Master
~December 28th, 58 years~



Grace Orthodox
Presbyterian
Church's

December 2018

*Showing forth the
excellencies of
Jesus Christ*



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
2	3	4	5 Prayer Meeting	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 Bowling and Pizza Party	28	29
30	31					

Garlic Roasted Potatoes



Ingredients:

- 3 pounds small red or white potatoes
- 1/4 cup good olive oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic (6 cloves)
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

Instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
- Cut the potatoes in half or quarters and place in a bowl with the olive oil, salt, pepper, and garlic; toss until the potatoes are well coated. Transfer the potatoes to a sheet pan and spread out into 1 layer. Roast in the oven for 45 minutes to 1 hour or until browned and crisp. Flip twice with a spatula during cooking in order to ensure even browning.
- Remove the potatoes from the oven, toss with parsley, season to taste, and serve hot.

*“For He
has satisfied
the thirsty
soul,
and the
hungry soul
He has filled
with what
is good.”*



Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church's

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Spurgeon Corner

"Thou art all fair, my love."

Song of Solomon 4:7

The Lord's admiration of his Church is very wonderful, and his description of her beauty is very glowing. She is not merely *fair*, but "*all fair*." He views her in himself, washed in his sin-atoning blood and clothed in his meritorious righteousness, and he considers her to be full of comeliness and beauty. No wonder that such is the case, since it is but his own perfect excellency that he admires; for the holiness, glory, and perfection of his Church are his own glorious garments on the back of his own well-beloved spouse. She is not simply pure, or well-proportioned; she is positively lovely and fair! She has actual merit! Her deformities of sin are removed; but more, she has through her Lord obtained a meritorious righteousness by which an actual beauty is conferred upon her. Believers have a positive righteousness given to them when they become "accepted in the beloved" ([Eph. 1:6](#)). Nor is the Church barely lovely, she is *superlatively* so. Her Lord styles her "Thou fairest among women." She has a real worth and excellence which cannot be rivalled by all the nobility and royalty of the world. If Jesus could exchange his elect bride for all the queens and empresses of earth, or even for the angels in heaven, he would not, for he puts her first and foremost—"fairest among women." Like the moon she far outshines the stars. Nor is this an opinion which he is ashamed of, for he invites all men to hear it. He sets a "behold" before it, a special note of exclamation, inviting and arresting attention. "*Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair*" ([Song of Sol. 4:1](#)). His opinion he publishes abroad even now, and one day from the throne of his glory he will avow the truth of it before the assembled universe. "Come, ye blessed of my Father" ([Matt. 25:34](#)), will be his solemn affirmation of the loveliness of his elect.

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Morning, December 2nd, C.H. Spurgeon

Front Page Concluded...

choose to do things that are contrary to God's revealed will, we inherently express ingratitude to the One who holds us in life. To lie, to cheat, to steal, to dishonor a parent, to break the Sabbath day, to murder or commit adultery in our hearts – it is all base ingratitude.

Finally, this enables us to see that although Thanksgiving Day is now past for another calendar year, every day is a day for giving thanks to our great God and Father through Jesus Christ. It is not hyperbole to say that we ought

always to give thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father. That is simply the normal pattern that every Christian should follow.

