



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: An Attitude of Gratitude

Guest(s): Chuck Swindoll

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener-supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Well, hello everyone. And welcome to Family Talk. I'm your host, Dr. James Dobson. On today's program, we're going to bring you a presentation from my good friend, longtime friend, Chuck Swindoll. He served as the fourth president of Dallas Theological Seminary from 1994 to 2001. Since then he's served as chancellor of Dallas Seminary and senior pastor of Stonebriar Community Church. He is also the founder of *Insight for Living*, which produces a radio program of the same name on Christian and non-Christian radio stations around the world. The program is heard on more than 2,000 stations and is translated into several languages.

Chuck's message today is all about the importance of Thanksgiving. I think there are times in our lives when we get so busy, we forget to stop and thank the Lord for His many blessings. Today, you'll hear that word Thanksgiving, and when it's supplied to God's grace, it has entirely new meaning. This is an outstanding program. I hope you enjoy it. The message was taken from a chapel service at Dallas Theological Seminary and his presentation is titled "An Attitude of Gratitude." Let's give a listen now to my good friend, Chuck Swindoll, on today's edition of Family Talk.

Since I was a little boy, I've had a special place in my heart for what is now and has long been my favorite holiday of the year, Thanksgiving. I remember standing as a 10-year old child at Southmayd Elementary School in a portable building in east Houston with my hand over my heart, as we were saying the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. Our teacher led us in that and then always followed the pledge with a prayer. This particular day she seemed to sort of stumble through the prayer. I didn't understand until later why. Every time her prayer would end with a reciting of the Lord's Prayer, which we would join in and pray with her. And by the time we reached "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever amen," she was audibly sobbing.

I found out at recess that she had lost her husband about five months earlier on the blood-washed shores of Normandy. And the one she had loved and lost now

left her grieving and she faced her first Thanksgiving, and of course, her first Christmas to follow without the one she had loved and lost. All of sudden my world was reduced to her grief and I found myself walking home slowly that afternoon along streets filled with little modest pre-war houses. And in the living room windows of many of homes were bright red stars, that over the course of months that would pass, would change to white crosses. As another beloved son or brother or grandson would have fallen in his last full measure of devotion to his country.

I walked slowly that day and I think during that time I began to cultivate a special place in my heart for this particular holiday. It would follow, of course, that next day. And thankfully, I was reared in a home where the name of God was mentioned often, where we had prayer at every meal and Christ was worshiped and the work of the church was admired. I am eternally grateful for that heritage, which I have come to realize in my years in ministry is not the heritage of many, dare I say, most, certainly most of this generation. I had no idea on that day that some 14 years later I would celebrate the Thanksgiving isolated and lonely wearing the uniform of the United States Marine Corps on a South Pacific island.

Little did I know at that time when that happened, that God's hand was all over those months of loneliness away from my wife and away from my family. Little did I realize that a year from then my next Thanksgiving would be celebrated on this campus as a first-year student in the year, 1959. Each Thanksgiving, Cynthia and I would always have something special that we would do for other students. I think it was our second, may have been our third year, we invited all of the international students on the campus on that particular Thanksgiving day. In those days, the only international students present at the school were the Korean men who were there at that time. It was an all-male school, so these men were there. Most of them would be away from their families for four years without interruption. They never went home.

They were gracious enough to accept our invitation and they came and filled the room. I believe there were 12 to 13 of them, white shirt, black ties, black pants, looked like a room full of Mormons as they stood around the table and we were all there. And one man later became Dr. Kim, who is a pastor of one of the large Presbyterian churches in Seoul, began to cry. He said, I've never seen this much food in all my life. He said, we could feed a Korean family on this, if we could preserve it, for six months or more.

And I said to him, would you lead us in prayer in your native tongue? And then would you men sing the Korean national anthem? Oh, man. So we began to pray. And if you've ever been around Koreans as they pray, they go from Africa to Zurich in their list. And after the film started the form over the gravy, I noticed, as he was praying and he wasn't in a hurry nor should he have been. And then they sang. And when they sang, they stood with their arms by their sides and their chests out. And they just bellowed the Korean national anthem.

It was a magnificent moment. By then, we were all in tears and we, of course, spent the afternoon feasting on the meal.

I have learned since then the importance of truly observing Thanksgiving. We plan to do it this Thursday with members of our family. There'll be 15 of us at our table and we make special arrangements. We do a special meal and we all sort of pitch in. And then we spend time around the table expressing what we're grateful for. God has given us a Psalm of Thanksgiving, which we often read as a family when we are observing this day. And today it becomes for us, our focus. "Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me. Bless his holy name, bless the Lord, oh, my soul, and forget none of his benefits."

What a grand word that opening verb is. It is repeated at the end of the Psalm. In fact, the identical line that begins Psalm 103 ends Psalm 103. Barak, it means to bow the knee before one's sovereign. It is the whole idea of acknowledging the awesome presence of one's God. And the Psalm is David, wherever he is and whatever may have been his circumstances, he's caught up in this magnificent moment of praise to his God. Interestingly, he doesn't exhort the reader to bless the Lord. He doesn't exhort the nation he serves over as king. He exhorts himself. Oh my soul, bless the Lord. He speaks to himself.

So, what we have in the Psalm for five verses, words directed to one's self in this case, the Psalmist, in our case, the reader. And he enumerates the number of things that he is grateful for. And then he turns to the nation at verse six and he blesses the Lord as nation and he gives God praise for his goodness, loving kindness, compassion, mercy, and protection. And then at the end about verse 19 down to 22, it is a blessing that is international and universal. As he speaks to the angels and says to them, "Bless Yahweh, bless his holy name, you who flood his presence with your praise and adoration."

I love the words of Spurgeon on this Psalm, especially the first five verses. Here David begins his list of blessings received, which he rehearses as themes for praise. He selects a few of the choices, pearls from the divine love, threads them on the string of memory, and hangs them about the neck of gratitude. This is a grateful man whose life has been scarred and marred by sin, and affliction, adversity, hardship. Who knows how many times David wanted to just run as far as he could? He's known days like that. And there's not a person in this room who can't identify with those feelings. He's been at the lowest depths and he's been at the heights of his emotions. And now with stylus in hand, he sits down, actually may have written it on his knees and he bows his heart low before his sovereign God. And he strings the pearls along this necklace of gratitude.

Now, for what is he grateful? Look for yourself. After acknowledging that he is to bless God and forget none of those benefits, he now names five specific benefits. Each begins with who, referring to the sovereign God. "This Lord, whom my soul blesses, has pardoned all your iniquities." Isn't that great? Think back, don't go too far or that's all you'll be doing for the rest of the time. Just think back over the last six months. It's a harsh journey, but go back to those

sins that you've been forgiven of. He's forgiven you every one of them. He pardons all your iniquities. He likes the word "all" in the Psalm. It's used frequently. How kind of our God to pardon our iniquities. Look down at verse 10. He has not dealt with us according to our sins. He has not rewarded us according to our iniquities as high as the heavens are above the earth.

"So great is His, hesed, loving kindness toward those who fear." He'll come back to that word in a few moments when we get ... He's already mentioned it actually earlier in the Psalm. "My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought, my sin, not in part, but the whole is nailed to the cross. I bear it no more. Bless the Lord, oh my soul. I bear no more. As far as, what, east is from west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." He forgives us all our iniquities and He doesn't measure them against us in the months to come. He doesn't haunt you with them in your studies at this school, he doesn't dog your steps with your iniquities. If He did, we would all quit. But thank God He forgives us. He pardons us all our iniquities.

This second troubles us. He is the same sovereign who heals all our diseases. Wait, wait. I would love to just race right on through that, but realism won't let me. Too many diseases, I know, right now haven't been healed. I buried a dear brother a few weeks ago who wasn't healed of a disease, it took him. So obviously, we can't read this literally because we know there are diseases that aren't healed. It might be well to consider this as reference to adversities and setbacks or perhaps the diseases that sometimes follow such, bitterness, revenge, those things that come as a result of our lacking forgiveness of others, those diseases of the soul, those emotional diseases over which the Lord is able to heal us and heal all of them.

Look at verse six. The Lord performs righteous deeds and judgment for all who are oppressed. There it is. And I can't mention that matter of adversity and setback without remembering Job, everybody's hero. Took him a long time to find healing, a long time. His book is a philosophical book and it's filled with questions. In fact, he says on one occasion, "I would that I could stand before him and argue with Him. You too would say that having buried all of your children and all of your servants and found yourself bankrupt, no ability to make a living and sitting in sack cloth, and ashes." But he began to get a breakthrough about chapter 23.

"He knows the way that I take when he has tried me, I will come forth as gold. My foot has held his steps. Neither have I gone back from the command of his lips, I have esteemed great word in the Hebrew. I value the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." Check it out for yourself. Job 23:10 through 12. He's getting a breakthrough. He's beginning to be healed in the midst of the disease of disillusionment and what could have been bitterness, which tragically, his wife suffered from; "Curse God and die."

Be careful that you don't mock his wife. She too had lost all the children. My daddy used to say, we don't all have the same put together. We got a different

put together. I can roll through some things and Cynthia's stuck back here. Some things she can take and handle so much better than I, and I can't get on the first base. So here's a couple in the midst of their loss who had tried to make it through. So, when you come to Thanksgiving, take time to thank Him for forgiven sins, that He's pardoned all of your iniquities. Take time this Thanksgiving to thank Him for the adversities and setbacks He's healed you and begun to heal you of. Take time for that.

He also redeems your life from the pit. I like that word pit. I like it when the prophet says "Praise that he would remember the pit from which he had been dug." He redeems your life, has referenced to the pit of sin, no doubt. The pit of eternal punishment that would have been yours and should have been yours, all things considered, save the death of Christ. The pit of corruption. Look at 15 of this same chapter. "As for man, his days are like grass, as a flower, the field he flourishes when the wind has passed over it, it is no more. And its place acknowledges it no longer, but the loving kindness," there's that word again, "of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting."

"I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined unto to me and heard my cry. He lifted me up from a horrible pit, from the miry clay and established my going." Psalm 40 one to three, great verses to repeat at Thanksgiving time. When Thanksgiving comes, take time to recall a few of the pits of your past. Give Him thanks for redeeming your life from those pits. When Thanksgiving comes, remember His rewards and look at this one. "He crowns you with loving kindness." There's that word, hesed, and compassion. This Thanksgiving, call to mind His grace. You stumble through the grace of God all the way through this Psalm. It's His grace. It's His grace. This Thanksgiving, thank Him for those loving kindnesses and His compassions that fail not, that are new every morning, every morning.

And we read, "He satisfies your years with good things so that your youth is renewed like an eagle." Ties in beautifully with the last of Isaiah 41. "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." Hebrews 13:15. Offer sacrifices of praise. It's why you have lips. Every Thanksgiving, remember this talk. Every Thanksgiving. And whether you have much or little, make it a special day. Fix whatever meal you can afford to fix. Bring with you around the table those you can bring. And after feasting on whatever it may have been, push the plates back and tell your stories.

Remember all of those inequities from which He has pardoned you. Remember the afflictions and adversities through which He has taken you and healed you. Remember the pit from which He has redeemed you, crowned you with loving kindness, compassion. As you look around at those white hairs and older lives, give thanks for them as well.

Dr. James Dobson: What an appropriate message. I hope you were encouraged by it and developed a new appreciation for an attitude of Thanksgiving. You've been listening to a

sermon by my great friend, Chuck Swindoll here on Family Talk. If you'd like to learn more about Dr. Swindoll's ministry, go to our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. If today's message encouraged you, I would love to hear about it. You can write me a letter and send it to 540 Elkton Drive, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80907. And I look forward to hearing from you. I'll end today's program by quoting Numbers 6, "May the Lord bless you and keep you and make his face shine upon you and give you peace."

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey everyone, did you know that radio is more popular now than ever a new feature here at Family Talk? We're excited to announce it's called the station finder feature. This is Dr. Tim Clinton for Family Talk. I want to tell you how you can listen to our daily broadcast on a station near you. Go to the broadcast menu at drjamesdobson.org, then click on the Family Talk radio stations button. Once you're there, you're going to see an interactive map of radio affiliates, which by the way is growing every day. Simply click on your home state, and then you'll see where our broadcast is airing in your town. Stop randomly spinning around the dial, hoping to find Dr. Dobson and Family Talk, go to drjamesdobson.org and take advantage of this brand new station finder feature.