



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: An Attitude of Gratitude

Guest(s): Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Dr. James Dobson: 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, long-time friend, Chuck Swindoll. He served as the fourth president of Dallas Theological Seminary from 1994 to 2001. Since then, he 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 2000 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 applied 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.

Chuck Swindoll: 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 ten-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 the 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 a 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 those 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 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 to form over the gravy, I noticed

as he was praying and he wasn't in a hurry and 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 Psalmist 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 oneself, in this case the Psalmist, in our case the reader, and he enumerates a 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, 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 choicest 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 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 this 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 chesed, loving kindness toward those who fear him. 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 it 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, the second troubles us. He's 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, 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 sackcloth 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. We're not all... My daddy used to say, we don't all have the same put together. We got a different put together. Some, I can roll through some things and Cynthia's stuck back here.

Some things she can take and handle it so much better than I and I can't get on first base. So here's a couple in the midst of their loss who are 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 the 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 as reference 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 of 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 me and heard my cry. He lifted me up from an horrible pit, from the miry clay and established my going." Psalm, 41 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 is that word chesed, "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." That'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 iniquities 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 and compassion. And as you look around at those white hairs and older lives, give thanks for them as well.

Roger Marsh:

Well, amen. A very, very powerful and poignant sentiment from Chuck Swindoll today here on the special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Hope you're enjoying your Thanksgiving celebration and thanks for spending a portion of it with us here today. We've been revisiting a classic presentation from Chuck Swindoll called "An Attitude of Gratitude."

It's a perfect reflection on Thanksgiving Day, but really all throughout the year as well. Of course, Dr. Dobson and Dr. Swindoll have a long, rich history of ministry together and Dr. Dobson joins in the chorus of those saluting Dr. Chuck Swindoll who just retired after reaching the age of 90 and spending Lord knows how many years in pulpit ministry in addition to broadcast and media ministry as well.

Now, if you'd like to hear this program again or perhaps share it with a friend, remember you can always do so using the Family Talk app or by going online to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk and you do so today. That'll be the program link that pops up today for today's broadcast. Again, you'll find that information at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And while you're in our online resource center, be sure you also browse a little bit.

You'll find information about the Bringing Up Girls 10-day email series, absolutely free. Just click on that link and you can go ahead and request starting to receive those 10 daily emails, one each day for 10 consecutive days. You can also check out the Dobson Policy Center. Gary Bauer is our senior vice president of public policy here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. He hosts the Defending Faith, Family and Freedom Podcast each and every week in addition to serving as a regular guest host here on the Dr. James Dobson Family Talk Radio program.

You can pick up the DFFF podcast as we call it at OnePlace.com, or you can get it on the Family Talk app as well. In addition, check out the brand new Dobson Culture Center under the helm of our senior director of the culture center, Dr. Owen Strachan. Dr. Strachan currently blogs each week.

The Lighting Up Culture blog is available for you, absolutely free. All you have to do to start receiving yours is go online to drjamesdobson.org and click the link for the Dobson Culture Center and you can start receiving that free subscription. And also, be on the lookout for the brand new podcast from Dr. Owen Strachan, Grace and Truth.

That'll begin very, very shortly here at the start of the new year. And of course, if you'd like to reach us through the US Postal Service, our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, Post Office Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The zip code, 80949. Again, that's JDFI for short. P.O Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The zip, 80949. Doctor?

Dr. James Dobson: What an appropriate message for Thanksgiving Day. I hope you were encouraged by it and developed a new appreciation for an attitude of Thanksgiving. 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.