

Give Thanks Always

I Thessalonians 5:16-22

PW Emerson – 11/10/2019 – Ten:27 Ministries

Earlier in the service people shared about a wide variety of people in our lives that we are thankful for:

- Spouse
- Parent
- Sibling
- Teacher
- Best Friend
- Coach
- Co-Worker
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It is important, not only to be thankful, but also to show our appreciation for these people. I encourage everyone to make sure to tell someone that you are thankful for them – whoever that person may be.

Although giving thanks is mentioned in a number of places in the bible, there is 1 place in the bible that is especially well-known for giving thanks and that is what we're going to take a look at today:

I Thessalonians 5:16-22

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹ but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²² reject every kind of evil.

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will

This verse is often misread as, “Give thanks for everything” - that’s ridiculous

- I’ve worked with abused teenagers for years – NONE have given thanks for the abuse they endured
- I have known many people who have had cancer – NONE of them have given thanks for the cancer!
- When the US economy down ten years ago, hundreds of thousands of people lost their jobs – I don’t imagine they went home with their pink slip saying thank God
- When the stock market tanks, many people lose their retirement – I don’t imagine any are thankful for that!

But it’s very different to give thanks IN all circumstances

- For the abused teenager, that may mean being thankful for the next door neighbor or coach who got the teen out of the abusive situation
- For the cancer survivor it may be giving thanks for the doctor
 - Who performed life-saving miracle surgery
 - Or the nurse who was always there to provide comfort and reassurance
- For the person whose job was eliminated, it may mean giving thanks for
 - The new job
 - The people that helped out between jobs

In the midst of difficulties or turmoil, it is easy to be down or depressed.

In those circumstances, Paul wants us to remember the blessings from God.

Paul reminds us that we can celebrate in those circumstances.

How often are we really thankful for something?

Not just saying “thanks” or “thank you” because we’re being polite

- Someone gets the door for us or bring us something

Rather are really thankful for something or someone?

The Apostle Paul is very good at giving thanks

- Romans 1:8 First, I thank God in the name of Jesus Christ for all of you. I do this because people everywhere in the world are talking about your faith.
- I Corinthians 1:4 I never stop thanking my God for being kind enough to give you Christ Jesus
- Philippians 1:3 Every time I think of you, I thank my God.
- Colossians 1:3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you
- I Thessalonians 1:2 We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers.
- II Timothy 1:3 I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.

In everything, give thanks. Paul practices what he preaches.

I love the pattern – when Paul starts a letter, he says his version of hello, (grace and peace to you) then he tells the audience that he regularly thanks God for them!

Imagine starting the day, regularly, by thanking God for ... something or someone!

1. Half awake, half asleep – thank God for ... whatever

2. Knowing what's coming up – work – start by thanking God ...then off to the grind

I suspect that's what Paul did!

Being thankful was deeply rooted in Paul's beliefs about God, his understanding about God.

Paul was convinced that in any and all circumstances, God was at work on behalf of his people.

Thus Romans 8:28

We know that **God makes all things work together** for the good of those who love Him and are chosen to be a part of His plan.

Paul believed this because he knew God was in control in all things, at all times.

For example, someone would die. You and I may be sad for the loss of that person.

But Paul would give thanks, knowing that death doesn't have the last word, God does.

God controls life & death.

Thus, Paul would give thanks, even in that circumstance.

Paul expresses this as a core piece of who we are as Christians.

Philippians 4:5-7

⁵Let all people see how gentle you are. The Lord is coming again soon. ⁶Do not worry. Learn to pray about everything. Give thanks to God as you ask Him for what you need. ⁷The peace of God is much greater than the human

mind can understand. This peace will keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

One component of being at peace is being thankful!

Paul is saying that if we are Christians, then we are giving thanks to God.

The heathens are those missing God and are NOT giving thanks

Romans 1:21

²¹They did know God, but they did not honor Him as God. They were not thankful to Him and thought only of foolish things. Their foolish minds became dark.

That's not what God wants for us.

One thing I am focused on with this church is the idea of living out our beliefs.

So it seems appropriate we take a look at an event in the Bible where people are giving thanks.

Luke 17:11-19

¹¹ Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance ¹³ and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

¹⁴ When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

¹⁵ One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

¹⁷ Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹ Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

Look at who came to Jesus – Lepers! (people society had left for dead)

- Not just any old lepers – Samaritans (outsiders, pagan believers thought of as being insensitive to God)
- It was believed that the kingdom of God was not for them
- They were in the worst place life could put them (no Salvation Army)
- These were people who were looked at as being beyond help

And in such a state they took their burdens to the Lord

- This text tells us that NONE are turned away from God.
- In the midst of rejection, seek out Jesus for compassion.

Thanks is our response. Once we realize this incredible love, even in the worst of times, our response to God is one of amazement, awe, and thanks.

The lepers in our text got their lives back, perhaps even got their lives for the first time. They were ecstatic! You know what it's like when you make a major life change (marriage) you can't wait to get going with your new life.

One of the ten lepers remembered what life *was* like. He knew where he would be without God. So he responded to God's compassion with thanks.

One of my favorite activities with the church is to go on a mission trip. We find out that we are all in the minority. We are part of 15% of the world's population with a per capita income of at least \$10,000.

Last week I took a friend to a small restaurant to celebrate his birthday. On the menu were not only hamburgers, but also turkey burgers, bison burgers, 4 different kinds of fish, pulled pork & beef brisket. And this was a small mom & pop establishment.

We pretty much eat whatever we want. We are so fortunate that we are able to participate in whatever we want – wrestling, drama, band, choirs, skiing, hockey, Green Peace, online chatting, surfing the internet, etc. As a result, we find we busy ourselves with everything under the sun.

In the midst of it all, we must take time from our lives to give thanks to God. If you've never been to Haiti, Africa, and Eastern Bloc nations, it's hard to imagine what it's like to be in want.

This weekend we recognize the 30th anniversary of when the Berlin Wall came down.

I've been to East Germany and East Berlin – empty shelves in the supermarket, long lines for toilet paper, armed guards watching you wherever you went, no freedoms, no due process, no privacy, etc.

Imagine living a life in that environment, then being teleported to New York City.

The lepers were thrilled – ecstatic!

- They couldn't wait to explore more
- Enjoy being with people

- Being able to eat at a table like a normal person
- Trade and barter goods like everyone else
- NOT standing out in a crowd
- Go to the temple for any occasion

ONE of the ten lepers immediately stops to give thanks to God.

Jesus doesn't respond

- you now owe me xxxxxx – so become a priest
- or give all the money you'll ever make to the temple.

Jesus responds with encouragement - "Rise and go, your faith has made you well."

There's something I notice about people who are regularly giving thanks

THEY ARE MUCH MORE AT PEACE! THEY ARE IN A MUCH BETTER MOOD

I'm sure Paul started so many of his letters by saying "thanks" because it set the tenor for the entire letter!

Thankfulness to God should not fluctuate with our circumstances or feelings

Acts 16:25

²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing songs of thanks to God. The other men in prison were listening to them.

They were ***IN PRISON***, yet they were singing songs of thanks to God.

And it got through to those around them!

We should always be grateful to God.

Colossians 4:2

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful & thankful

Paul wants their every day to start with thanks so that their entire day will be a great blessing and they will have wonderful joy!

He wants that for us too!

I challenge each of us this week – start every day by giving thanks.

- When you get up in the morning give thanks –
 - For your home
 - For your spouse
 - For your kids
 - For your grandkids
 - For you job
- When you get to work, start by giving thanks
 - For the job
 - For the income
 - For the co-workers

See how that affects your day.

As you can see, there is more to “being thankful in all circumstances.”

Paul calls on us to be thankful in all circumstances.

In 1636, amid the darkness of the Thirty Years' War, a German pastor, Martin Rinkart, is said to have buried five thousand parishioners in one year, an average of 15 a day.

The parish was ravaged by war, death and economic disaster.

In the heart of that darkness, with the cries of fear outside his window, he sat down and wrote this table grace for his children:

Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices;
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom his world rejoices.
Who, from our mother's arms,
Hath led us on our way
With countless gifts of love
And still is ours today.

Here was a man who knew thanksgiving comes from love of God, not from outward circumstances.

What are we waiting for?