

Thankfulness

Part 1

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

INTRO:

As you can probably tell from your outlines that we are not in Paul's works of the flesh list of Galatians this morning. This being thanksgiving weekend, I thought it would be good for us to take a little break from the works of the flesh series and give us an opportunity to look at and share on some of the things we are, or ought to be thankful for. For the last 7 messages you have been hearing me talk about looking to yourself on the inside, to see if there are any bad things you have allowed into your heart, but for today, I want us to look at the things on the outside, of the good things that the Lord has done for us, things we are thankful for.

If the Lord tarries, this topic of thankfulness will become a series that I will cover over the next few years during this time of thanksgiving, and just as a forewarning, these messages including today's will only be half or three quarter length messages.

Thankfulness

To give you the opportunity to come up and share about what you are thankful for, of what God has done in your life, the victories He has given you over the last year, and the things you have overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit, or simply thankful for the many blessings God has blessed you with.

I know that the food and program committee is also planning a sharing time at the church thanksgiving supper next week, but that should not matter to us as Christians. As Christians we should be able to thank the Lord every week on what he has done for us, every day for that matter, as we have so many things, we should be thankful for. And even if you share something here this morning, there should be many more that should come to mind 2 weeks from now.

The scripture reference for this series is 1 Thessalonians 5:18 which reads;

in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

It is found in the middle of a list of miniature commands from Paul to the people of Thessalonica, some of them not more than two or three words in length, and much of the chapter is filled with such short commands but in verses 16 through 22 he says:

16 Rejoice always,

17 pray without ceasing,

18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

19 Do not quench the Spirit.

20 Do not despise prophecies.

21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.

22 Abstain from every form of evil.

Little tidbits for the Christian in walking with the Lord, and if we go through these quickly it shows us what our walk should look like as Christians, to start we have the two words from verse 16 which reads;

rejoice always.

In Luke chapter 10 verse 20, Jesus spoke to the seventy who were sent out ‘two by two’ into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. And when they returned with joy they said ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name’ to which Jesus responds;

"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Thankfulness

This is one of the things every born again believer can, and should rejoice over every minute of their life, every minute, every hour, every day, month and year, we are to ‘rejoice always’ that our names are written in heaven. That our name is written in the ‘Lambs Book of Life’ that is before the throne of God.

Verse 17 says that we are to ‘pray without ceasing’, now I don’t think it means we are to walk around mumbling all day long, but rather, it is to be an unbroken conversation with our Lord, that it would always be at the forefront of our minds in talking to God. To acknowledge Him in the first things we do in the morning, to go to Him for trouble during the day, to thank him for the blessings and guidance He gives us in our daily walk, and to think of Him when we lie down at night.

All these are short quick commands for the life of the Christian, verse 19 says;

do not quench the Spirit.

Do not ignore the Holy Spirit when He is speaking to you, when either in guidance of good things or in the conscience of being tempted with bad things. Verse 20 says;

do not despise prophecies

Thankfulness

And as my study bible says; having ‘a contemptuous attitude of mind’ in regard to God’s Word and the power of the Spirit. And verse 21 and 22 which I noted in the series of the Works of the Flesh when I talked about sorcery.

That we are to test all things and hold fast to the things that are good, good meaning everything that lines up with the will and character of God. And we are to abstain from every form of evil, and note here it does not say abstain from everything that ‘is’ evil, which we are to do anyway, but it says every ‘form’ of evil. Anything that may not inherently be evil but has the form or appearance of evil, to abstain from things that may even look evil or bad even though they may not be.

Quoting Albert Barnes commentary he says;

Not only from evil itself, but from that which *seems* to be wrong. There are many things which are *known* to be wrong. They are positively forbidden by the laws of heaven, and the world concurs in the sentiment that they are wicked. But there are also many things about which there may be some reasonable doubt. It is not quite easy to determine in the case what is right or wrong.

The safe and proper rule is to *lean always* to the side of virtue. In these instances, it may be certain that there will be no sin committed by abstaining; (*but*) there *may be* by indulging.

He says that if it even looks like evil or has the ‘form’ of evil, refrain from it, do not do it, or participate in it, for in refraining you are sure you will not fall into sin.

But in the middle of all these verses there is verse 18 which says;

18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Paul says, in all things, in all times, in every aspect or phase of life we are to give thanks, not ‘for’ everything, that’s not what he says, it is in everything. In that even if we think there is nothing to be thankful for, we are still to have a heart of thankfulness as Paul also says in Colossians 3:15 saying;

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

And not only in the New Testament, but Old Testament books like the Psalms are filled with such commands by saying;

Thankfulness

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!

Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name; The upright shall dwell in Your presence.

That we would be as Daniel, that when he heard of the decree that was passed, that anyone who petitions any god or man for thirty days except the king was to be cast into the den of lions. And then as verse 10 of Daniel chapter 6 says;

...when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

He prayed and gave thanks before God, and basically signed his own execution warrant in doing so. As our verse says ‘in everything give thanks’ for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Thankfulness

This is God's will for you, for your life, this is what He wants you to be like in your life in all things. It is 'His will' for you that you be thankful in all things, again not 'for' all things, but 'in' all things. And I think this is one area of our lives, including myself that we often find ourselves lacking.

In fact, I believe that our whole world has become lacking in this area of thankfulness.

We have come to an age where we expect everything to be instant gratification for us. In looking at the trends of our social medias, many, if not all of them center around the 'ME' aspect of our world, about how quick I can get 'MY' wants out of the world, and about how fast I can get my next 5 second funny out of my phone. About prioritizing myself above everything else.

We have come to a world that has become severely lacking in being thankful for what we have, and is more focused on our rights, our wants, and our wishes, and the emphases of my dissatisfaction if these are not met.

And instead of looking at what I do have, or am able to do and being thankful for them, our society is creating a severely discontented generation, in that we are not thankful for things we ought to be thankful for, but continue to look for the pleasures and desires that are not met at this very moment.

And from that, this nation has become a very unthankful nation. Just as scripture tells us of what will happen towards the last days, in Paul's second letter to Timothy chapter 2 starting in verse 1 he says;

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:

2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Thankfulness

And we are beginning to see these things in many people of our nation, people, falling into these categories. And just as Jesus says in Matthew chapter 24, speaking of the time of the end in verse 12;

"And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

And when love grows cold, thankfulness dies.

As the quote from bob Jones goes;

When gratitude dies on the altar of a man's heart, that man is well-nigh hopeless.

He is basically saying when a man comes to the point where he is not thankful for anything in his life, there is really no hope left for such a man.

Because that man is then entirely consumed with self, he is apathetic, critical, indifferent, and insensitive to anything that would come to him. He becomes the man of 2 Timothy chapter 2 which we just looked at.

And to expound on that, being thankful or giving of thanks is not something that is or comes natural to man is it. When our children are but wee little toddlers what is the one thing we as parents say over and over and over to them? Say please and say thank you, because what is the natural action of man from the time we are under a year old, it is selfishness, from before we can talk or walk our nature or instinct is just too... (snatch an invisible object from the air and hold it to your chest as ownership, grunting in the process). And it is this ungrateful attitude, this unthankful mindset that has to be worked out of the child, as with the words of Proverbs 22:15;

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

Because if it is not removed or taken care of when they are children, they will grow up and continue to be ungrateful and unthankful as teenagers, and let me tell you there is hardly anything more unattractive than having the normal teenager with their ‘I’m the center of the world kind of attitude’ mixed with un-thankfulness. Because what happens is that such teens grow up, and become ungrateful adults. The attitude may subside by this time, but the attitude of not being thankful will remain. And he becomes the man as I noted earlier, one that is then consumed with self, is apathetic, critical, indifferent, and insensitive to anything that would come their way.

Thankfulness

And if it is something unnatural to us, then we must work at it, every day we must work at it and that is why Paul says or actually commands us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 that we;

in everything give thanks;

he doesn't say 'if it feels good or feels right, he does not just recommend that we give thanks if we want to, no it is a command that in everything we are to give thanks. And why, why are we to give thanks in everything, even though it is something that goes against our natural man and nature... because as Christians it...

...is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you

This is what God wants from us, from His people. This is His will for us that we be a thankful people for Him in this world, that we truly acknowledge where everything we have comes from, truly reflect on what the true source is of all that we have, including our life. And just a note here, when is the last time you thanked the Lord for your life? And I don't mean just your health, but that you are alive and can give glory to the one who created you?

Thankfulness

You see, animals cannot glorify God, rocks cannot praise Him, the beauty of the earth may show His glory and the heavens His handiwork, but they cannot give Him glory, they cannot praise Him.

Psalm 6:5b says;

In the grave who will give Your thanks?

Psalm 30:9b says;

Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your truth?

Psalm 115:17;

The dead do not praise the Lord, Nor any who go down into silence.

And the next verse says;

But we will bless the LORD From this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD!

And this is why, if you are alive, a Christian, a new creation, being thankful should not only be something we ought to do, but something we should be willing to do, that just as we have put on the new man, thankfulness would become part of our new nature, to do it all the time and to thank God for all He has done and is doing in our lives and for our life.

Thankfulness

As Psalm 100 says;

1 A Psalm of Thanksgiving. Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!

2 Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.

3 Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.

And as I said earlier if the Lord tarries, we will continue to look into the aspects of thankfulness over the next few years. This has only been the introduction to the series.

And for today I want to open it up to all of us for a moment of sharing, to express from your hearts the things you are thankful for, for some of the things God has done in your life.

Thankfulness

Because in all reality our lists should almost be endless of the things the Lord has done for us, even if you would look at all the things you could be thankful for in only the first few hours of this very day.

See you may be sitting there thinking;

Well all I did today was that I got up out of bed this morning, sat at the kitchen table and had my milk and cereal, had my shower, put on my Sunday clothes, drove to church sat in the pew and now here I am, wondering what I should be thankful for during this sharing time.

Well let me help to break it down for you.

You got up out of bed, this morning...

- 1) means you had a bed to sleep in,
- 2) I'm assuming your bed was in a house,
- 3) your house is probably heated, right,
- 4) you had enough health to get up by yourself, that means your leg and arms still work,
- 5) your eyes work if you saw it was morning, and your ears work if you heard your alarm.
- 6) you made it to the kitchen table means you have more than one room in your house
- 7) and you sat in the chair and not on the floor.

Thankfulness

8) you had food for breakfast and not dirt, you had milk and not just water,

9) you had a shower which means you had running water,

10) it was probably warm,

11) you put on your Sunday clothes; means you have more clothes than just one pair.

12) you put them on so again your appendages all work.

13) you drove to church in a car, you didn't have to walk, bike, or ride, you sat in a car with heat and a cab.

14) you didn't have to sneak to a church, you just drove up to the parking lot and walked in.

15) there is no persecution, no one waiting outside to kill us or some officials waiting to barge in and arrest us.

16) you're sitting in a pew, not on a dirt floor, or hiding in a cave,

17) you have a song book beside you

18) you have a bible in your hand,

19) you can openly fellowship about the word of God with fellow Christians in this sanctuary.

20) Thankful that the only thing you have to worry about right now is wondering what I need to go up and be thankful for.

Thankfulness

And all of this in only the first few hours of the day. I sometimes think we have been so over blessed in our time and place, in the here and now of our nation that we have become lethargic in our thankfulness.

We have so much plenty and comforts that we have forgotten that many of the things in life we take for granted are some of the ultimate luxuries in some of the other parts of the world.

And so with that I want to open up the rest of the service for you to share, share, and be thankful on some of the big things God has done for you in life, or even some of the little things He does for you on a daily basis. Because the Lord loves it when we give Him the glory, no matter if it is in the bigger things in life, or in some of the little things that would seem almost insignificant to others but would be impossible without God.

Thankfulness

And if you want your pastor to go first I gladly will.

I want to thank the Lord for providing and sustaining us in our ministry here in Vanderhoof. God has blessed us and provided for us in all that we need and even in some of our wants.

If I look at how God has blessed our garden this last year alone, our potato bin is full, we have boxes of carrots in the cold storage and bags and bags of peas and berries in our freezer. Our other freezer is completely filled with a whole freshly butchered pig, and He has blessed us physically and abundantly in this area.

He has blessed us financially, in the last 7 months of being full time on salary from the church, all our bills are paid, our payments are on time, our cars are full of gas, and we don't kid ourselves either, that's not a cheap purchase these days is it. But I have so much to be thankful for in how the Lord has taken care of us in our ministry, in regard to our finances, in provisions, in almost every aspect of our life God has taken care of us and blessed us during this time. And even though our nation is falling apart, God has blessed through His means and through His people of His church during this time, and as we trust God in all things we giving Him thanks in everything. And I thank God for all of these blessings.