GOSPEL CENTERED THANKSGIVING
1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

Grace Life Church
of Dallas
The doctrines of grace, the life of the Spirit, to the glory of God

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EXAMINING OURSELVES

- **1 Thessalonians 5:18** *give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*
  - The verb here is in the present tense – denoting a continuous action. One of the marks of a Christian life is to be continually thankful.
- **Ephesians 5:17-20** *Therefore do not be foolish, <u>but understand what the will of the Lord is</u>. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 <u>giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ</u>,*
- What do we see both in Ephesians 5:17-20 and in 1 Thessalonians 5:18?
  - Command to give thanks in all circumstances/give thanks always and for everything
  - Will of God/Will of the Lord
  - In Christ Jesus/In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

- **Luke 17:11-19** *On the way to Jerusalem he* (Jesus) *was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. 12 And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance 13 and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." 14 When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. 15 Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; 16 and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19 And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."*
  - Being healed for these men not only restored their health, it restored their lives, it took them from being outcasts to being allowed to be among family and friends again.
- Questions for us

WARNINGS AGAINST INGRATITUTE

- Ingratitude or ungratefulness is not just some kind of harmless absent-mindedness, it is a failure to acknowledge God as the creator and ruler of the universe. It is a failure to see yourself in light of the cross. It is a failure to approach your circumstances from a gospel centered perspective.
- Example of Israel:
- **Exodus 16:1-6** *They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. 2 And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, 3 and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." 4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. 5 On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily." 6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, "At evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt,*
- **Malachi 1:2** *"I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us…*

Seriousness of ingratitude:

Romans 1:18-21 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, <u>they did not</u> honor him as God or <u>give thanks to him</u>, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

Idolatry - *22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

Sexual Immorality - *24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves*

Perversion - *26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.*

All manner of unrighteousness - *28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God (by honoring Him and giving thanks to Him), God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.*

2 Timothy 3:1-5 *But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. 2 For people will be <u>lovers of self</u>, <u>lovers of money</u>, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, <u>ungrateful</u>, unholy, 3 heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, <u>not loving good</u>, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, <u>lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God</u>, 5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.*

Being a lover of self, lover of money and lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God and lover of good shows itself by ungratefulness (among other things).

THE COMMAND

- **1 Thessalonians 5:18** *give thanks in all circumstances…*
- Difficulty in this command comes in its scope – <u>in all circumstances</u>.
  - Desires turn into expectations/ God or other people fall short of what we expected/we become frustrated and ungrateful and we grumble and complain.
  - Can be in mundane things.
  - Or in much greater and more serious things (illness, trials, suffering, etc.)

2 Corinthians 4:15-18 *For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people <u>it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God</u>. 16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 <u>For this light momentary affliction</u> is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

Light and momentary affliction?

- **2 Corinthians 11:24-28** *Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.*
- Is giving thanks in these kind of circumstances just putting some silly smile on your face or giving lip service and saying "thank you Lord"? Is this just some kind of legalism that tells us that no matter what God brings into our lives we are to just put our heads down and push through it all the while giving lip service of thanksgiving to Him?
- NO, as Christ said "out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45), so we have to begin at the heart level.
- 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, Paul gives us the key, it is a matter of perspective!
  - *17 <u>For this light momentary affliction</u> is preparing for us an <u>eternal weight of glory</u> beyond all comparison, 18 as we look <u>not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen</u>. For the things that are seen are transient, but <u>the things that are unseen are eternal.</u>*

FULFILLING THE COMMAND

- **1 Thessalonians 5:18** *give thanks in all circumstances; <u>for this is the will of God</u> <u>in Christ Jesus for you</u>.*
  - We need to take the principles of renewing our minds and taking thoughts captive, and apply them to “the will of God” and “in Christ Jesus for you”.
- **Romans 12:2** *Do not be conformed to this world, but <u>be transformed by the renewal of your mind</u>, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
- **2 Corinthians 10:5** *We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and <u>take every thought captive to obey Christ,</u>*

The Will of God

- **1 Thessalonians 5:18** *…for this is the will of God….*
- This is an example of why theology and doctrine matter - if we don't acknowledge God's sovereignty in salvation, how then can we acknowledge His sovereignty over all other things?
- **Isaiah 46:8-11** *"Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, 9 remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' 11 calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.*
- **Psalms 84:11** *For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.*
- One of the key struggles becomes understanding how a sovereign God defines "good things".

- **1 Thessalonians 4:3** *For this is the will of God, <u>your sanctification</u>…*
- **James 1:2-4** *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*
- Others will say “Why don’t you just curse God and die?”
- What we have to remember is that God doesn't promise to change our circumstances. He promises to change us, and He is providentially providing the exact circumstances to do that.

In Christ Jesus

1 Thessalonians 5:18 *…in Christ Jesus for you.*

Warning from God:

- **Deuteronomy 8:11-17** *"Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, 12 lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, 13 and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, 15 who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, 16 who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. 17 Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.'*
  - The people of Israel had forgotten their redemption from Egypt, how much worse for us to lose sight of our redemption from sin.
- Remembering what we deserve (wrath and punishment) and our redemption in Christ and seeing all our circumstances in light of that – this is Gospel centered thanksgiving, this will allow us to give thanks in all circumstances.

- Being tempted to be ungrateful is not a sin, and the battle of faith to believe God rather than your feelings is not sin, but sin is when we allow those thoughts freedom in our minds which leads to our thoughts and feelings taking us captive rather than us taking them captive.
- Command to be thankful in all circumstances is accomplished by seeing God rightly (sovereign/loving Father, His will is your good and His glory) and seeing and treasuring Christ more. A life of thankfulness is really just one of the overflows of that.
- Example of Paul pointing to Christ and the gospel as motivation for our Thanksgiving:
  - **Ephesians 5:1-4** *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, <u>as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God</u>. 3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, <u>but instead let there be thanksgiving</u>.*
  - Thanksgiving is not a private thing.

FILTER FOR CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

- **Romans 14:23** *But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For* <u>*whatever does not proceed from faith is sin*</u>*.*
- **1 Corinthians 10:23, 30-31** *23 "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up… 30 If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks? 31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*
- How do we determine if something like eating comes from faith or not, how would we determine if it is something that is helpful or profitable (builds up)?
- Test - the ability to offer thanks.

APPLICATION

- Example of Eve
- A lack of thankfulness to God = pride
- We do not want what we deserve.
- When our feelings differ from what God's word says, then the issue becomes a matter of trust and faith.
- Examine yourself.
- Do you have people intimately in your life?
- If you see ingratitude in your own life: 1) confess 2) repent 3) remember that true thankfulness is not just lip service, but begins with seeing who God is, what was accomplished for us in our salvation, it begins with seeing and treasuring Christ, and 4) ask others to hold you accountable because we can be deceived by sin (Hebrews 3:12-13).