

Ephesians Chapter 5: 20 & 21; “Giving Thanks Always”.

The apostle Paul in this section of his letter is giving instructions to the church of Ephesus, on what they can do to be wise as believers.

In verse 15 he says that they should be careful in their spiritual walk, and not be fools.

In verse 16 he says that they should be redeeming the time for the days are evil.

In verse 17 he says that they should understand what the will of the Lord is.

And in verse 18 he tells them not to be drunk with wine, but to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Being filled with the Spirit, he says, will mean that believers will be speaking to one another, and singing to one another in their worship of God and making melody in their hearts to the Lord.

To further explain this, I said to you in our last study that this means that you will cultivate your personal devotion to God by meditating upon the book of the Psalms often.

And then, flowing out of that devotion you will be bringing the fruit of that devotion to the worship service of the whole church.

And thus, your fellowship with every believer there will be better established, to the glory of God.

A real part of your fellowship with believers there at church will be, if you can give thanks for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1st of all – Why is it so important to give thanks always to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ?

It is important because your giving God the Father thanks, always, is an act of faith and trust in His providential ordering of all things in your life.

You are saying that you acknowledge that He is sovereign, that He is in control, over everything in your life.

You are saying that He is righteous and good in everything that He orders for your life, and the lives of everyone around you.

Your giving thanks is your expressing to Him in your own words, the words of your mind and your heart, this truth.

That which comes out on your tongue, in your prayers and communion with Him, and others in your church, affirms this to Him.

When you are learning to give thanks always, you can be assured that it will become the established attitude of your mind and heart.

According to the context of the verses that we are studying, this giving of thanks to God should often be taking place in the context of our fellowship and communion with other believers in the local church.

Together we lift up His name in public worship. We praise Him and we thank Him for all that He is to us, and all that He does for us.

We give Him thanks for how He leads us and guides us through this life.

Concerning giving thanks in His name, Thomas Manton in his sermon on this verse, says this: “The name of God is that by which He is made known in His word or works.” “As we are to propagate to others what knowledge we get of God by His word, so also what we have found of grace and mercy.” “This is one part of the communion of saints, to call upon others to praise God with us, as one bird sets the whole flock a chirping.”

Look with me over at Psalm 100. “Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands!” “Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing.” “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.” “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.” “Be thankful to Him, and bless His holy name.” “For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.”

So, since you are one of God’s people, do you see here that in your personal and private worship of God you ought to be giving Him praise and thanksgiving for His being your God? He made you and not you yourself.

Believing in God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ has brought to you salvation through the gospel.

Through Jesus Christ your Lord, He has commended His own love and good will towards you, a sinner.

Because He has shown you mercy, you have become a sheep of His pasture.

The Father, through our Lord Jesus, has given you spiritual life and all things.

And so when you come to worship Him each Lord's Day, you ought to do so with a shout of joy in your heart.

Perhaps you will even come to worship Him with such anticipation, that there will even be a shout upon your lips!

This is the kind of eagerness for worship which ought to be in the hearts of all of God's people.

Why? Because you are going to meet with God, and to give to Him the glory which is due His name.

Because of the greatness of the grace which you have received, you can serve the Lord with gladness.

You can come before Him with singing.

You know that the Lord, He is the only true and living God.

You want to enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.

See how praise and thanksgiving go hand in hand in worship and in living your Christian life to God.

Once again, Thomas Manton says: “**Praise relates to God's excellencies**, thanksgiving to God's benefits.” “There is a two-fold thanksgiving – 1) By way of celebration or commemoration, when we speak of God's mercies one to another. And 2) By way of invocation,(*that is, calling upon His name, or extoling His greatness*), in adoration, or worship, when we express them to God.”

We need to see from what Manton is saying here, that our thanksgiving is a thanksgiving by way of commemoration, when we communicate to others what experience we have had of God.”

Psalm 66, verses 16-20 gives us the spirit of praise and thanksgiving which should be the desire of our heart; our wanting to tell others what He has done for us. “Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul.” “I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue.” “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” “But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.”

You will notice the fervent desire which is displayed by the Psalmist to call out, that others in the sacred assembly would come and hear what God had done for his soul.

This should be our desire in our New Testament sacred assembling together of ourselves; to be able to tell others what God has done for our soul as well.

This is done first of all by our giving a testimony of how we have come to faith in Christ.

But it should also be done in our Sunday by Sunday fellowship and interaction with each other; that is, telling others what the Lord has done for us personally.

This would be telling others of God's people how He has helped you, and what He has shown you from His word.

You will tell them how He has instructed you, sustained you, and helped to encourage your soul through the Scriptures and by His Spirit's working in your life.

In doing this you want others to see God more clearly. And you want to help them to understand better,
the importance of cultivating their personal relationship with Christ in this holy way, so that they will walk more closely with Him themselves.

2nd – What are the things that we should be thanks always for, both in God’s sight, and in the presence of our brethren?

“Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

Now, the way that this is worded here should lead us to understand that the “all things” which we are to be giving thanks for, to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, are not only all the blessings of our salvation, but also the people of God in the church that he has placed us in.

In the words of verse 21, immediately following those in verse 20, Paul is indicating that we ought to be able to give thanks for them, and we ought to be willing to submit to one another in the fear of God.

Now, this connection that I have just made to you may not be apparent to you unless you do a study in a concordance of the word “thank”.

If you do this, you will see it. Let me show it to you.

Turn with me over to Romans 1: 8-. Paul says here – “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” “For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.” “For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established – that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.”

Now, I hope that you immediately notice that this is the very same kind of language that Paul used in the text that we are studying in Ephesian 5.

Paul thanks God the Father through Jesus Christ for all of the believers in the church at Rome.

He commands them, in that their faith is spoken of in all the world.

He states that he serves God in his spirit in the gospel of His Son, and that without ceasing, or always, he is making mention of them in his prayers.

Why? So that he might impart some spiritual gift to them so that they would be established. So that they would be encouraged together by their mutual faith.

So giving thanks always for all things means, at least in part, giving thanks for the other believers in your own church.

And if you can give thanks for them, you can also learn to pray for them and submit to them. Paul, by using this word “submit” (**υποτασσω – hoop-ot-asso**),

he is telling the believers there in Rome that they should be able to receive instruction in the word, advice, and encouragement from the other believers in the assembly, so that the whole body would be built up together, and become more like Christ Himself as a result.

This is confirmed for us if we turn over to Romans chapter 15, verses 13 & 14. “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” “No I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another.”

It is this kind of interaction between believers in the local church which requires submission to one another.

It is saying, if my brother is trying to share something with me which will be of spiritual or practical value to me, I will receive it. I will submit to him by listening to him and receiving what it is that he is trying to tell me.

Ah, this is a very wonderful and powerful thing which can take place in the life of a church by the power of the Holy Spirit working in their hearts!

Look also at 1st Corinthians 1: 4-10. “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Wow, what a wonderful testimony of the grace of God given to them as a church! And yet there was a problem.

Verse 10 says – “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same things, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” “For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you.” “Now I say this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas, or I am of Christ.” “Is Christ divided? “Was Paul crucified for you?” “Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.” **Now, what is Paul getting at here?** He was saying, that the believers in this local church in Corinth ought to be able to give thanks for all

things, that is, all their godly Christian teachers who were teaching them more about the faith.

Those who were saying – “I am of Christ” were saying that they would not make any man to be an authoritative teacher over them, except for Christ.

They would receive His words to them, but not necessarily all of the apostles and teachers under Him, to exercise authority over them.

Both of these positions were wrong, Paul was saying.

They ought to have been able to submit to any of the apostles, but not to have set one up above another, in terms of whose teaching they would submit to.

And Christ Himself would want this for them.

This is a very important principle of truth for us to receive in living our Christian life.

We ought to be able to submit to each other in the local church.

We ought to be able to submit also to pastoral authority and the teaching of our pastor in our local church.

But we also ought to be able to receive truth from other men who have been called to minister on a broader level;

men who have things to teach Christians in many church settings,

and yet they have not church authority over them.

They still have the authority of the word, to speak the truth in love, for the building up of the body of Christ.

Let us submit to one another in the fear of God, and always see the men who are truly called to the ministry,

as gifts to our church and to the whole church, if their ministry reaches that far.

One final section of verses in this regard. Philippians 1: 3-11.

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very things, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.”

“For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.” “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

**Paul’s giving thanks in every prayer of his, is the same as his giving thanks aways for all things,
as we find it in our verse that we are studying.**

He is making request with joy, and the reason that he can do so, is that he remembers the fellowship in the gospel which they had, **from the very first day that they had received it**, until the time of his writing this.

It was right for him to believe that God, who had begun a good work in them, would complete it until the day of Christ.

It was right for him to think this way because he had them in his heart.

And the reason that he had them in his heart was because of the real support that they had shown to his ministry, **even though he was at that time, in prison.**

He knew that they were all partakers with him of grace.

You see, if the focus of the believers in the local church, is upon grace, and they know that they are sharers in that grace together,

then surely we can pray for each other as Paul prayed for these believers at Philippi.

He prayed that their love would abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,
so that they would approve the things that were excellent, so that they would be sincere and without offense to each other till the day of Christ.

He prayed for them that they would be filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ.

And this would be to the glory and praise of God.

This is why we give thanks always for all things to God.