

- **"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (I Thess. 5:18)** In Paul's closing remarks to the Thessalonians, a section that has often been used to show how we as Christians ought to act in our waiting for the return of Jesus, Paul admonishes these brethren to make sure that they are always giving thanks to God. This admonition to give thanks was not something that Paul was unfamiliar with. Paul himself often expressed his thankfulness and appreciate toward and for those Saints that he would be writing to. He thanked God for the brethren in Rome. **(Rom. 1:8)** He thanked God on behalf of the Corinthians. **(I Cor. 1:4)** He couldn't cease to give thanks for the Ephesians. **(Eph. 1:16)** He told the Colossians that he and others "give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you" **(Col. 1:3)** These along with other passages of the Bible clearly show us that the Apostle Paul was a man with a thankful heart.
- This upcoming Thursday, we as a nation of people will gather together with our families and friends and we will celebrate the holiday of Thanksgiving. While our celebration of Thanksgiving certainly looks very different from the first observance in 1621, the purpose is still to stop and take time to be thankful. For those earliest settlers, they were thankful for their first successful harvest. And for us today, we have innumerable reasons to stop and give thanks to God.
- Sadly though, stopping to take the time to thank God for our many blessings doesn't happen nearly as often as it should. Our lives are so busy and hectic that it takes a special effort for us to stop & simply thank God for and truly appreciate our blessings. We, also, don't give thanks as much as we ought to because we're constantly asking God for more & more in this life. Sometimes we just need to stop and give thanks for what we do have instead of asking for even more. This morning, I would like for us to be reminded about why we ought to take some time to be thankful. Not just to take the time this week every year, but to constantly make the effort to just stop & thank our Father for His countless blessings upon us.

### I. God desires for us to be thankful

- A. Paul states this very thing within our beginning verse of **I Thess. 5:18**. It is God's will for us to be a thankful people.
1. This is something that has been true for years and years. God has always desired for those who follow Him to be thankful for what they have been blessed with.
  2. Moses and the Israelites sang a song of praise and thanksgiving to God for all that He had done for them during their exit from Egypt. **(Ex. 15:1-18)**
  3. David was a thankful man, and He expressed this in **Psalms 34**.
  4. The mother of Jesus, Mary, showed her thanks to God through the song she sang. **(Luke 1:46-55)**
  5. The demon possessed man showed his thanks to Jesus by going and telling everyone about the amazing thing that Jesus had done for him. **(Mark 5:1-20)**
  6. One of the 10 lepers that Jesus cleansed came and gave thanks to Him. **(Luke 17:12-19)**
  7. God is pleased and desires for His creation to be thankful.
- B. The reality is that God desires for a thankful people because thankful people recognize that they completely rely upon Him for all things.
1. The **33rd Psalm** is a perfect example that shows this to be true in the life of one who is thankful.
  2. The Psalm begins with praises and thanksgivings being made toward God and the rest of the chapter lays out the things to be thankful for and why this person is thankful.
  3. He is thankful for the upright nature of God and His Word. **(v.4)** God is faithful, righteous, just, and the earth is full of the lovingkindness of God.
  4. He is thankful for the fact that God made all things, including us! **(vv.6-9)**
  5. He thanks God for His working within the nations of men and the protection that gives His people. **(vv.10-12)**
  6. He is thankful for the guidance and power that God gives His people. Battles were not won on their own, but they were won through the power of God. **(vv.13-20)**
  7. The writer concludes with a power statement.... he rejoices in the Lord because He trust in Him. He is thankful to God because he fully trust in Him. This is God's will for us, that we would fully trust in Him, be dependent upon Him and thank Him for all things. **(vv.21,22)**

## **II. There are reasons to be thankful in all of life's situations.**

- A. Some would only thank God when things are going good and they have no problems.
  1. As long as things are good in their life, then God will be thanked and praised.
  2. But as soon as something goes wrong...they begin to blame God and seek to disparage His name as if He is only the provider of those things that are good.
  3. This wasn't the attitude of Job, however. Job was a man who was willing to praise and give thanks to God in all situations...even the bad ones. **(Job 1:20-22)**
  4. Job recognized that God was worthy to be praised and thanked in the good and the bad. We would do well to remember this as Job did.
- B. God desires for His people, just like Job, to give thanks at all times.
  1. Again, going back to our verse in **I Thess. 5:18**, "in everything give thanks."
  2. Other translations render the beginning as "give thanks in all circumstances" (ESV); "give thanks in every situation" (CEB); "give thanks no matter what happens" (NIRV)
  3. This idea of always being thankful regardless of what is going on is echoed in other texts. **(Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:15-17)**
  4. In all situations, we can find something that is worthy of thankfulness towards God. Many times bad situations could've been worse. We might lose loved ones, but we can be thankful for the times we had with them. We might lose a brother or sister in Christ, but can be thankful for their realized hope. It may seem difficult and it might not always be fun, but God has been good to us all, and that includes even in times of difficulty. We ought to take the time to thank Him even during these times.

## **III. Being thankful is a step in the right direction towards learning contentment.**

- A. Those who are never thankful are usually the ones who are never satisfied.
  1. You might think about the parable of the man of **Luke 12:16-21** who was a productive farmer.
  2. He had good harvest, but we never see him give thanks to God or be satisfied with what he had. He said he would be satisfied one day... but he never saw that day.
  3. God rebuked the man for being self centered, and because of that self centered attitude, he never gave thanks to God for his many goods.
  4. We must be a people who stop to recognize the good that we presently have and give God glory and thanks for those things.
  5. Failure to give thanks can lead down the dark road of taking all things for granted and never being satisfied. The Apostle Paul could've easily gotten to this place in his life because of all the things that he went through **(II Cor. 11:23-28)**, but he learned to be content in all situations, to give thanks to God, and to stay focused on Him. **(Phil. 4:11-13)**
- B. So then how can we be thankful? I think there are a few things that we can do to be thankful and show our thanks.
  1. Firstly, we can truly be thankful for all of God's blessings in our hearts. True gratitude must begin in the heart.
  2. We can privately thank God for everything we have. Constant prayers of thanks towards God shows that we acknowledge Him for the good things in this life.
  3. We can not be shy about thanking God publicly for our blessings. As long as our heart and motives are pure, we wont have to worry about gloating as the Pharisee did in **Luke 18:10-12**.
  4. We can show our thankfulness by sharing our blessings with others. If God has blessed us so abundantly, then we can show our thankfulness by blessing others in the same way.
  5. We can show a heart that is focused on being thankful to God and His blessings by always looking for the good even in a bad situation. God's blessings are always there for us to focus on.

Our God has been more than gracious to all people in this world by sending His son to save us all, but He has also blessed us in this country with far more than we could ever need. May we always be thankful, and may we express our gratitude to God on a regular basis. Our God is good to us all the time, and we need to be a thankful people all the time. May God help us to have hearts of gratitude that use our many blessings to bless as many others as we can. And may God be praised and glorified in our taking of time to be thankful.