

The Will of God - Thankfulness

Sermon Delivered on November 24th, 2019
AM Service

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Text:

1 Thessalonians 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. 15: See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. 16: Rejoice evermore. 17: Pray without ceasing. 18: In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 19: Quench not the Spirit. 20: Despise not prophesyings. 20: Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. 22: Abstain from all appearance of evil. 23: And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24: Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. 25: Brethren, pray for us. 26: Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss. 27: I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. 28: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Introduction

We are living in the last days. The Bible says that one of the characteristics of men and women, boys and girls in the last days is that people will become unthankful.

2 Timothy 3:1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2: For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, **unthankful** ...

A thankful person is very rare. It is not common. It is harder and harder to find a grateful person. Thankfulness seems to be a lost art today. Someone once said, *“Blessed is he who expects no gratitude for he shall not be disappointed.”*

A story was told about a young man who was in a crowded bus and offered his seat to a young lady. The young lady was shocked, so shocked that she fainted. When she finally regained consciousness, she thanked the young man, and the young man was shocked, and he fainted.

This Thursday we as a nation will celebrate Thanksgiving Day. But we don't have to wait until Thursday to give thanks. For God's people every day ought to be a Thanksgiving Day. Thankfulness is one of the most important qualities we can develop as Christians. Jerry Bridges puts it this way, *“You and I will never be the Christian we need to be without “THANKFULNESS” as a major quality of our life! The Bible teaches that “GRATEFULNESS” is the normal quality of a Christian's life ... without it our Christianity would be warped and unproductive!”*

But what is thankfulness? Thankfulness to God is a recognition that God in His goodness and faithfulness has provided for us and cared for us, both physically and spiritually. It is a recognition that we are totally dependent upon Him; that all that we are and have comes from God.

Alex Haley, the author of “Roots,” had an unusual picture hanging on his office wall. It was **a picture of a turtle on top of a fence post**. When asked, “*Why is that there?*” Alex Haley answered, “*Every time I write something significant, every time I read my words and think that they are wonderful, and begin to feel proud of myself, I look at the turtle on top of the fence post and remember that he didn’t get there on his own. He had help.*”

That is the basis of thankfulness - to remember that we got here with the help of God, and that He is the provider of every blessing we have. Actually the word “**gratitude**” is from the same root word as “**grace**,” which signifies the free and boundless mercy of God. As it says in church bulletin today, “*Thanksgiving is the response of a grateful soul to a gracious Saviour.*”

Our text this morning is ...

1 Thessalonians 5:18 **In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.**

Here is a clear command to be thankful. How can I be thankful? How should I give thanks? How can we be thankful everyday even when nothing is going my way? The Bible shows us.

I - At the Right Season

We must give thanks at the right season.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 **In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.**

When is the right season or time to give thanks? The right season is all the time. Just as we are commanded to preach in season and out of season likewise, we are to give thanks in season and out of season. Thanksgiving is never out of season! We read in ...

Ephesians 5:20 **Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;**

We are commanded to give thanks in every circumstance. In **good times** and **hard times**. In **joy** and in **sorrow**. In **plenty** and in **poverty**. In **prosperity** and in **adversity**.

A good illustration of this is the story of the English minister and Bible commentator **Matthew Henry** who lived in the 1700’s. Matthew Henry was robbed once and listen to what he wrote in his diary when it happened to him. “*Lord, first, I thank You, because this is the first time I ever been robbed. Second, I thank You although they took my wallet, they did not take my life. Third, I thank You because although they took all I had, it was not much. Fourth, I thank You, because it was I who was robbed and not I who robbed.*”

Matthew Henry was not being thankful because he robbed per se, but he was thankful still even if bad circumstance of being robbed. He still found so many reasons to be thankful even in that unpleasant and scary experience of being robbed.

William Barclay wrote, *“There is always something for which to give thanks; even on the darkest day there are blessings to count. We must remember that if we face the sun the shadows will fall behind us but if we turn our backs on the sun all the shadows will be in front.”*

II - To the Right Person

We must give thanks not only at **the right season** but also **to the right person**.

[1 Thessalonians 5:18](#) In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

This Thanksgiving Day a lot of people are thankful but being thankful is not enough. True biblical thanksgiving **requires an object**. There must be a **Giver** to whom we give thanks, and whom we acknowledge as the **Source of our gifts**. As Phillip Yancey once said, *“It is a terrible thing to be grateful and have no one to thank, to be awed and have no one to worship.”*

This is the dilemma of atheists. They feel grateful but they have no one to thank. A good illustration of this is the outspoken and militant atheist, Richard Dawkins. During a debate, he said...

“When I lie on my back and look up at the Milky Way on a clear night and see the vast distances of space and reflect that these are also vast differences of time as well, when I look at the Grand Canyon and see the strata going down, down, down, through periods of time which the human mind cannot comprehend . . . it's a feeling of sort of an abstract gratitude that I am alive to appreciate these wonders, when I look down a microscope it's the same feeling, I am grateful to be alive to appreciate these wonders.”

Dawkins and his atheist friends are in a dilemma or conundrum. Because **“being grateful”** calls for a second person or another person. They want to express gratitude but there is no one to turn to and give thanks. Gratitude is not complete if there is not another person to thank. Gratitude without a benefactor is like a sun without light and heat. It is like rain without water. So that *“sort of an abstract gratitude”* is meaningless. What empty feeling the atheists must have especially on Thanksgiving Day!

Now, when Paul said, [“In every thing give thanks”](#), he means be thankful to God. For we read in ...

[James 1:17](#) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

As I have said at the outset, thankfulness to God is a recognition of God's goodness and faithfulness to us. That everything we have this morning comes from the Lord.

III - For the Right Reason

We must give thanks not only at the **right season**, to the **right person** but also for the **right reason**.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Our text tells us that the will of God for our lives is to be thankful. It is God's desire that you and I should give thanks to God in every circumstance. This is God's will for us. Paul says, "*You don't have to pray about this one, it is God's will for you, that you should always be full of thanksgiving.*"

It's easy to be thankful when our **health is good**; our **family is secure**; our **finances are stable**, yet Christians are to be thankful in every circumstance. But in life, we all will be placed into situations which we may not like. Situations that may go against our plans and against what we want, such as, loss of job, financial setback, sickness, family crisis, death in the family. The Word of God tells us that it is God's will for us to be thankful even in these trying situations.

Can we really be thankful in everything? Can it be done? What does it take to be always a thankful person?

First, understand that the idea here is not, "*this is God's will, so you must do it.*" No that not it, instead the idea is "*this is God's will, so you can do it.*" We can do it. We can give thanks in everything because it is God's will.

Secondly, understand that we can give thanks in everything not only because it is God's will but also because we are "**in Christ**." It is because of our relationship to Jesus Christ that you and I will be able to give thanks.

Colossians 2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, **abounding therein with thanksgiving**.

What a beautiful exhortation to all believers. Having received Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, continue to live and walk with Him. Be rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith. As you grow and as you think about your relationship to Jesus Christ, **you will overflow with thanksgiving**.

Closing Thoughts

In closing I want us to remember that **Thanksgiving Day** is not just about being thankful—it's **about being thankful to the one true God**. As you pray and give thanks to the Lord this season, ask Him for a renewed sense of thanksgiving.

The poet George Herbert prayed, "*Thou who hast given so much to me, give one thing more, a grateful heart.*" God has given us so much but let us pray that He may give us one thing more - grateful heart!

As you celebrate Thanksgiving with your family remember God and His goodness. With all of our hearts, give thanks to God for Jesus' sake! God bless you all!

AMEN!