

Introduction:

- *"Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus."* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NLT)
- Enter His gates with Thanksgiving in our hearts, enter his courts with praise. Ps 100:4
- Have you ever noticed how kids who don't like to share or express gratitude are often called "spoiled." What happens to an egg when it gets spoiled? It might look fine on the outside but let's see what it's like on the inside ...I.E. two eggs one with happy face, one with sad. **Application:** We might all look the same on the outside, but when we are ungrateful and unwilling to give thanks to God or others, we become spoiled. Our hearts and attitudes can be just as stinky as this spoiled egg. God longs for all of us to give thanks in all circumstances. When we do, our hearts and minds will stay fresh.
- How does this truth relate to the suffering we experience? Gratitude is way more powerful than most of us realize and very beneficial to both giver and receiver. In relationships it is super life-giving and healthy. Lets break this passage down. Two points: God's will is for us to be thankful. God's will is for us to be thankful in all circumstances.

I. God's Will: Be Thankful

- A. What is God's will? In our passage God wills that I "be thankful." God wills that you and I be thankful. So as a believer I am to do the will of God. Therefore, I bring my will into subjection to His will because I want to will to do what He wills.
1. The word 'will' has several meanings. They get richer as we look at the list.
 - a) to be ready, to like, to consent to. So God is asking me to be ready to give thanks in all circumstance. God is asking me to like giving thanks in all circumstances.
 - b) to take pleasure in: He wants me to actual take pleasure in giving thanks in all circumstances.
 - c) This is my favorite: "The word also expresses resolve as free or weighed decision, sometimes with the idea of choice or preference, and religiously with the nuance of resolute willingness. Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (p. 319). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans. God desires/expects that I live with the resolve of giving thanks.
 - d) It is being obedient to the what God wants of me. "Obedience, however, is neither a natural process nor a miracle. It entails a willing subjection of his own will..." Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (p. 321). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.
 2. Let me give you a benefit of doing God's will. *"Then Jesus explained: "My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work."* (John 4:34, NLT) Jesus declares that He gets nourishment from doing God's will. IE. Do you ever get so hungry you feel weak? start shaking? Jesus is saying I am strengthened in my spirit when I do the will of God. One of the ways you can strengthen your spiritual man is by giving thanks.
- B. Lets look at the first part this verse. From 1 Thes 5:18 *"To be thankful"*. We should remind ourselves that thanksgiving is the essence of Christian living. What does that mean? What does that look like? This should be a natural expression of all those who call themselves Christian.

Being thankful, giving thanks, showing gratitude. So what does it mean to be thankful? In order to find something you have to know what you are looking for. So I will describe it to you. If I describe it to you, your chances of finding it will increase. But that still does not guarantee you will know how to use it.

1. When it comes to thanksgiving, many people are like that. They do not know what thanksgiving is. When Paul used the word, "thanksgiving" he was not talking about nor referring to an American holiday at the end of November, with turkey. So let me describe it to you and show you how it works. Then you can begin to practice it in your life.
2. ****Gratitude/Thanksgiving/Giving Thanks:** Is showing (and expressing) a feeling of thankfulness and appreciation to someone. Three parts: 1. expressing 2. a feeling or attitude of thankfulness 3. To someone.

C. Defined

1. In the O.T. one of the words for 'grateful' is *samah* denotes being glad or joyful with the whole disposition as indicated by its association with the heart (cf. Ex 4:14; Ps 19:8; 104:15; 105:3), the soul (Ps 86:4); and with the lighting up of the eyes (Prov 15:30) *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* Chicago: Moody Press.
2. In the NT. *Eucharist*: Some churches call communion time 'the eucharist'.
 - a) *eucharistéō* means "to be thankful" or "to give thanks". The root of it is *charis*.
 - b) *Charis* means "grace". So we are thankful for God's grace, favor, ability.
 - c) *Chara* - means joy. *****"Joy is what you experience when you are grateful for the grace that has been given to you."** Understand this, because you will not be able to do what God is asking if you do not. Gratitude without understanding grace can't produce joy.
 - d) You must be grateful/thankful to someone in order for thanksgiving to genuinely be thanksgiving. IE. Like trying to tickle yourself...you cant do it. You cant keep thanks giving to yourself you must express it to others.
 - e) So gratitude is being thankful and expressing that thankfulness to the person who blessed you with what they do or who they are. It has a heart connection attached to it.
 - le. "Mom, thank you for making dinner." "Dad, thank you for praying with me." "Thank you for taking time to talk to me today." "God, thank you for my family."
- D. So it is God's will that we be thankful. Therefore as a christian, I have a resolve in my heart to do what He desires and that is to have an attitude or a heart of thankfulness/gratitude to Him and to others. And by doing so, I am nourished in my spirit. Now lets look at the where God expects us to do this.

II. God's Will: Be Thankful in all Circumstances.

- A. Different translations of 1 Thes 5:18 "...**thank God no matter what happens. This is the way God wants you who belong to Christ Jesus to live.**" (1 Thessalonians 5:18, The Message) NKJV - in everything give thanks, NLT - be thankful in all circumstances.
 1. The character or pattern of the Christian life is the ability to give thanks in all circumstances and situations of life.

2. This is the responsibility of the believer before the Lord in their heart attitude. Giving thanks in all circumstances. "There are no boundaries, no "exception clauses" in regard to when we are to give thanks. We are to give thanks "in every thing."
 3. The words "in everything, in all circumstances, no matter what happens" comes from one little Greek word 'ALL'. It is all inclusive. We are to give thanks "in every thing."
 4. This leads to the big question(s) we all are asking...
- B. Why should I give thanks in all things? Answer: Because it is the will of God. It is what He desires of us. And we get nourished spiritually (we receive life) from giving thanks. The question assumes two things: Giving thanks in good times. And giving thanks in bad times.
1. When things are going good I give thanks in order to maintain a humble heart. Therefore, I should give thanks so that I do not become proud or develop a sense of entitlement.
 2. When things are going bad I give thanks in order to maintain a humble heart. Therefore, I should give thanks so that I do not become angry and bitter. I.e. Joseph. Joseph was not bitter at his brothers.
 3. It is easier to give thanks in the good things. That makes sense. "It is the bad things that are an issue for me giving thanks. That makes no sense."
 4. "How can a loving God expect me to give thanks for bad things happening in my life?"
 - a) He is not asking that we give thanks for the bad things that are happening to us. He is not asking us to be thankful when a young mother dies of cancer? Or to give thanks when you lose your job? Or to give thanks when you have diarrhea? We are not to thank Him for evil.
 - b) He is asking us to give thanks 'in' the bad things that are happening to us. There is a difference between the two. From John 4:34 we learn from Jesus that we are nourished spiritually. When that happens we filled with the life of God and kept from pride, entitlement, anger and bitterness.
- C. How are we able to give thanks when bad things are happening?
1. We make the resolve to do the will of God which is to be thankful in all circumstances. This is just plain 'stubbornness' to do the will of God. A choice/decision.
 2. Know that God is God. This answer is for those who may feel overwhelmed in trying to figure it all out: Just know that God is God. He is in control. So you give thanks simply for who God is.
 - a) Job is our example. "Job never really saw why he suffered but he saw God and that was enough." Tim Keller We get to see why he suffered, but Job did not. God was confident in Job's character and knew that no matter what Satan threw at him, he would not curse God. His own wife said, "Just curse God and die." Job 2:10 "*So in all this Job did not sin with his lips.*" Job chose to trust God.
 - b) What happens toward the end of the book of Job is that Job gets a revelation of who God is. He is humbled all the more and in repentance gives thanks for who God is.
 3. When bad things are happening we are enabled to give thanks when we remember who God is. We remember His character and His nature.
 - a) Paul and Silas are our examples here. Acts 16. Paul and Silas cast a demon out of a fortune teller. She is unable to tell fortunes and her owners (who now are not making any

money off of her) stir up trouble for Paul and Silas. A mob gathers, the city officials stripped them and had them beaten with wooden rods...severely. They are put in stocks and put in the inner dungeon.

- b) At midnight they start singing praise to God. Praise is thanks giving to God for who He is. In their circumstance they praise God.
- c) Praise is not about what you feel it is about what you know! We praise Him not for what we feel or see but for what we know and believe.
- d) I can be in a bad circumstance and remember His nature and who He is and suddenly I have something to give thanks for. Give thanks=eucharist. When I remember who He is my heart finds a glimmer of *Charis* - grace, who He is and His ability in me; that glimmer of grace results in *chara* - joy! From the connecting of joy and grace I am able to give thanks even in a difficult situation/circumstance.
- e) Spirit-filled people, Spirit-controlled people, godly people are marked out as thankful.

D. Fruit of Giving Thanks

1. *"My troubles turned out all for the best– they forced me to learn from your textbook."* (Psalm 119:71, The Message)
2. *"My suffering was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees."* (Psalm 119:71, NLT) Note the activity of David in this passage: in the place of trouble he was looking for God.
3. *"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."* (Romans 8:28, NLT) Giving thanks is the gateway to praise which is the gateway to the Presence. Ps 100:4 I will enter His gates with Thanksgiving, I will enter his courts with praise.
4. When I have given thanks in all things I rest knowing I have done the will of God.

Conclusion:

- Rotten eggs stink. So do ungrateful people. That is why it is so important to God that we learn to give thanks in all circumstances. It keep us from pride, entitlement, anger and bitterness. And make us smell like the fragrance of Jesus.
- *"Anyone who does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."* (Mark 3:35, NLT) Giving thanks in all circumstances relates us to Jesus.
- Giving thanks does not always bring an end to adverse circumstances but it will always bring an inner freedom. *"Then Jesus explained: "My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work."* (John 4:34, NLT)
- *Invitation to receive Christ.*