

## Daily Devotional, May 21, 2020 Growing a Thankful Heart

When is the last time that you stopped what you were doing, and truly thanked God for all that God has done for you? In I Thessalonians 5:18, we read that no matter what your circumstances may be, be thankful and give thanks. Even if nothing seems to be going your way right now, there is still reason to give thanks. Here, the Apostle Paul is telling us that we don't thank God for everything that *happens* to us, but *in* everything we give thanks. Evil things do not come from God, but when evil occurs, we can still be thankful for God's presence and for the good that God can accomplish through this time of distress.

Having a thankful heart is a mindset that you must create. We are not naturally born as thankful beings. It takes practice being thankful with others and with God. When you truly make being thankful a daily practice, you will find that your attitude and approach to life, will change for the better.

Here are some reasons that each of us as Christians have for giving thanks:

First, and most importantly, for salvation. Each one of us should be eternally grateful for what Jesus did for us on the cross. There is not one single thing that we could ever do to earn our way to Heaven. It is *only* because God loved us *so much* that He sent His son to die for our sins, something that we have no ability to do on our own. We don't have to spend our lives hoping and trying to be good enough to one day achieve this. It cannot be done of our own volition. The price for our sin was paid for by Jesus. If that isn't the most valuable gift ever given to us, I don't have a clue as to what could possibly beat it out.

I love how the Amplified Bible, Classic Edition translates 2 Corinthians 9:15: "Now thanks be to God for His gift, precious beyond telling, His indescribable, inexpressible, free gift!" You have one very extraordinary reason to be thankful today. You do not have to spend eternity separated from God if God's Spirit has brought Jesus into your life. You have been *saved by grace*. What is grace? Grace is everything God does for you, even though you don't deserve it. Grace is God giving you what you need, not what you deserve. We learn through God's Word, that everything you have comes by grace. Everything God does in you and through you and for you and to you and by you is *by grace*. You don't earn it, you don't deserve it, and you don't work for it. It's just a *free gift!* Thank you, thank you, thank you God!

I could stop there, but there is more! I'm thankful every day that God's faithfulness doesn't rely on my own faithfulness. 2 Timothy 2:13 tells us that "even if we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself". (NRSV) What God has promised He will do, and He will do it no matter what we do.

A favorite promise given to us in scripture is found in Philippians 4:19. It is beneficial to remind ourselves of this scripture when things aren't going our way. It states: "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus". (NIV) I often want God to supply all of my wants, but instead, God has promised to take care of my needs. I find that this is often where we get disappointed with God, when we pray for things that we desire rather than be grateful that our needs are met. I have air in my lungs, a place to sleep and food to eat. And sometimes a bit left over for some additional enjoyment. That is something to be thankful for.

Here's another one for you. How many times have we prayed and asked God for something and He's done it? Too many to count. I often thank God for the big things when God does them, but what about the little things? Have we thanked God for a good night's sleep, with help on a test, for a good day's work, for safe travels or for a hot shower? We constantly petition God in prayer and rarely thank Him.

When He healed the 10 lepers in Luke 17, only 1 came back to thank Him, Jesus asked the 1 leper where the other 9 were. How was it that only 1 came back for something as big as a life-giving healing? I want to live my life like that 1 who came back and worshipped Him and thanked Him.

I know it's hard to do sometimes. I've been at points in my life where it seemed I had nothing to be thankful for, times when I have felt as if I was at the end of my rope with no hope in sight. Times when I have felt betrayed, disparaged, or abandoned. The truth is that I had yet, a lot to be thankful for, but I wasn't looking for it.

Even in those despairing moments, when the arrows appear to be coming from every direction, when banana peels and 30 weight oil appear to be strewn across your path; stop and give thanks to God. No matter how bleak your situation, you will find that when you count your blessings, no matter how few seem visible in that moment, no matter how far you have to stretch to reach them, it will change you when you live with a grateful heart.

During these uncertain times, there is one more blessing that most of us can be very thankful for, but goes often neglected: our families. Our families have been vital to the formation of who we are. Love it or hate it, God placed you in your family for a very real reason. God wants us to show love and support to our family members. Although we are all individuals, we can use our commonality to draw us closer, in whatever form that takes.

In the same way that we draw closer to our families, we are called to draw closer to those in the family of God. Like our relationships between our siblings and parents, our spouses and children, these ties can be strained, so can our relationships with our siblings in God! We may not see eye to eye on everything, but our commonality is the blood of Jesus that runs through this family.

Be thankful and share your thankfulness with those that are in your family tree and your church family. What an awesome blessing that we get to do life with these family members! Remember the alternative: that it is always lonelier on your own!

**Prayer: Thank you, God, for the many blessings that you have given me. Thank you for supplying my daily needs, for my health, for shelter, for food and clothing, and most especially for the family that I have. Thank you for the family that you have adopted me into. Help me to not only be thankful for each member of the family but to play an important role in each of their lives as well! May I always hold them all in my prayers. But most of all, thank you for your grace. Thank you for the salvation that we find in Jesus. Amen.**