

11/22/2015

ESF, Lord's Day service message

Give Thanks In All Circumstances

Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

In Budapest, a man went to a rabbi and complained, saying, “Life is unbearable. There are nine of us living in one room. What can I do?” The rabbi answered, saying, “Take your goat into the room with you.” The man was incredulous at first, but the rabbi insisted, assuring the man, saying, “Do as I say and come back in a week.” A week later the man came back looking even more distraught than before. He told the rabbi, “We can't stand it. The goat is filthy.” So, the rabbi told him then, “Go home and let the goat out, then come back in a week.” A week later the man returned, radiant. He told the rabbi, “Life is beautiful. We enjoy every minute of it now that there's no goat, only the nine of us!”

To live with thankful heart, we may need wise advice. In today's word Paul says that we are to “give thanks in *all* circumstances” not just in good times or happy times, but even when everything goes wrong. He goes on to say that this is more than wise advice. This is the will of God! Then how can we be thankful in all circumstances?

Think about the benefits of thanksgiving

Thanksgiving opens the door to a content and peaceful life. Psychologists today tell us that sincere gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. Hans Selye, who is considered an expert on stress **research**, has said that gratitude produces more positive emotional energy than any other attitude in life.

According to the Bible, the origin of depression is ungratefulness. In Rom. 1:21 Paul says, *"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."*

Psalm 77:3 says, *"I complained and my spirit was overwhelmed."*

Thankfulness brings contentment. As Paul was thankful in all circumstances, he was also content in all circumstances. In Philippians 4:11-12 he testifies: *"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation,"*

If you are discontented with your life today, try to be thankful for everything. You will find that contentment is a byproduct of gratefulness.

Thanksgiving also brings us an inner peace. Paul says in Philippians 4:6-7, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

With inner peace, thanksgiving will eventually bring deliverance to our lives. In Psalm 50:23, God says, *"He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God."*

This is what happened to Paul and Silas when they were thankful while they suffered in Philippi (Acts 16:16-40). Paul and Silas were beaten by a mob and put in a prison. In this circumstance, they seemingly had nothing to be thankful for. However, they were praising God in the prison. Then God used an earthquake to shake the prison and eventually delivered them from the prison.

God also delivered Jonah from the belly of a big fish under the sea when he gave thanks to God. We can see that in the book of Jonah 2:9-10, “*But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the LORD. And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.*”

Focus on something positive in life

Some people make their lives miserable because they focus on the negative in life and complain or get easily depressed. To be thankful, we need to focus on something positive. Instead of looking at the negative in our lives and complaining, we must look at the positive and give thanks for them. When we focus on something good and positive in our lives, we can always be thankful.

A mom and dad brought their son into the living room for a stern discussion of the boy’s report card. Showing all “F’s” on the card, the dad asked the son, “What do you have to say about this, son?” The son replied, “Well, you could be proud of me, dad!” The dad, surprised, asked: “Proud?! Why would I be proud of you when you bring home a report card like this??” The son then answered, “Well, one thing you know for sure: I didn’t cheat!”

One day a TV reporter asked a mason, “How do you like your job?” “I hate it” he said. “It’s the most boring job in the world.” That same reporter asked another mason on the other side of the building the same question. The other mason replied, “Oh it’s great because I see myself building an architectural masterpiece.” They were in exactly the same situation. But their lives were so much different. One man was living a miserable life. The other man was living a happy life. What made the difference? Their perspectives of things in their lives made the difference.

Paul was thankful in all circumstances when he focused on something positive in his life. He said in 2 Corinthians 4:7-10, “*We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned, struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.*”

Negative	Positive
Hard pressed on every side	But not crushed
perplexed	But Not in despair
persecuted	But not abandoned
Struck down	But not destroyed
The death of Jesus	The life of Jesus

If he had focused on the negative things happening to him- being hard pressed, being perplexed, persecuted, struck down and the pain of death, he **would** have not been thankful. But when he focused on the positive things in spite of the negative- not crushed, not in despair, not abandoned, not destroyed, and **also focused on** the power of the resurrection of Christ, he was able to be thankful.

Someone wrote these words: “I am thankful for the taxes I pay, because it means I’m employed...for the piles of laundry and ironing because it means my loved ones are nearby...for the spot I find at the far end of the parking lot because it means I am capable of walking....for my huge heating bill because it means I am warm...for all the complaining I hear about our government because it means we have freedom of speech...for the lady behind me in church who loudly sings off key because it means that I can hear.”

When you don’t have a job you don’t thank God for your joblessness, you thank God for something you still have- health, shelter and food. When you are sick, you don’t thank God for the sickness, you thank Him that you **have** learned to pray for healing and for God’s grace which

makes you strong in weakness. When you suffer from difficult people, you don't thank God for the difficult people, you thank God that God molds you to be patient and mature.

Focus on positive things in your life. And you can be thankful in all circumstances.

Remember and trust in God's goodness

The reason we become ungrateful is because we forget the blessed things which God has done for us. That is why God repeatedly told his people to remember what He had done for them.

"Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert..."
(Dt 8:2).

"But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth..."(Dt. 8:18)

"Remember the wonders he has done, the miracles..." (1 Chronicles 16:12).



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.

It may not be easy for us to be thankful when bad things happen to us. But God commands us to "Give thanks in all circumstances" It means

we should and can be thankful not only in good times but also in difficult times. How can we be thankful even in difficult times?

The secret is trusting in God's goodness in all circumstances. Paul was able to thank God for everything when he trusted in God's goodness in all circumstances. In Romans 8:28 he says, "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*" Here we see one of the most blessed promises of the Bible for us. It promises that for those who love God, God turns every circumstance to their good.

Even to those of you who are in the midst of pain, crisis, or grief, God says, "Trust me. In all things I am working for your good."

To be thankful we must live by faith, not by sight. When sight says, "There is no God – look at all the suffering!" Faith says, "Even in this I believe God is good and He has a good plan for me."

There was once a young lady who had a very busy career. Even though she had a good job, she was miserable because her job demanded most of her time, and she had no time to be with friends. Because she did not have time to be with friends, she had never met a young man she could fall in love with, and so she was miserable in her heart.

One day, crossing a busy street, she was hit by a car and knocked out. She had been unconscious in a hospital for several days. During this time, she had one leg amputated. Her entire life came crashing down around her in one brief instant. She went into a period of deep depression, and even considered taking her own life. Her family, recognizing this, arranged for a young Christian counselor to speak with her.

Over the next year, not only was he able to lead her out of the deep

depression, they fell in love with one another and were married. She later told her family that, even though she was sorry about losing her leg, she was thankful because that incident enabled her to meet the man of her dreams!

Can we be thankful because life is always good? No, we can be thankful because God is always good. Can we be thankful because life is fair? No, we can be thankful because God treats us better than we deserve. We thank God for everything, because even a tragedy in our lives can be turned around by God's goodness.

Have faith in God's goodness for you in all circumstances. And you can always be thankful.