

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

In Everything Give Thanks 1 Thessalonians 5:18

People in the world, for the most part, have been successful at being able to ignore the church of Jesus Christ. They can do this because the church by and large does not stand out from the world. If the church is going to be taken seriously by our family members, our friends, our neighbors or fellow workmates, who do not know Christ, then we must be living a life that stands out from theirs. We must be different. We must look different. And we must look different in a positive way.

This morning we will be considering another very basic command found at the end of Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians. This command I believe will in fact contribute, if embraced, to the positive perception of the church by the world. Let us read **1 Thess. 5:18**

THE COMMAND

“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Paul is commanding us as God’s children to give thanks in what? IN EVERYTHING. What does this mean? IT MEANS THAT NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO US WE ARE TO EXPRESS THANKS. WE ARE TO GIVE THANKS IN GOOD TIMES AND WE ARE TO GIVE THANKS IN BAD TIMES. WHATEVER HAPPENS TO US IN THIS LIFE WE ARE TO BE THANKFUL.

And to whom are we to express thanks? We are to give thanks to God!! This is very clear to us in **Eph. 5:20** where Paul is describing Spirit filled believers as **“Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.”**

As you know, I was recently sick with the flu. What was the will of God for me in Christ Jesus in the midst of that flu? To give God thanks. I am now feeling great. I am free of fever, muscle aches, and any trace of sinus infection. I can breathe deeply without coughing or chest pain. What is the will of God for me in Christ Jesus? To give thanks to God. I have a beautiful wife who has been wonderfully supportive of me in my ministries. As I observe this support what am I to do? I am to give thanks. This same wife however on occasion, I am sorry to say, has found fault with me. What is the will of God for me in Christ Jesus? To give thanks to God. I presently have a van at my mechanic with an electrical problem. Each day I call and each day have heard the same story. They have not yet been able to find the problem. As I hear these words, what is the will of God for me in Christ Jesus? To give thanks to God.

I have illustrated the point of “giving thanks always,” using the mundane. Certainly there are others that are here this morning whose circumstances are far from mundane. There are people here this morning who are having extremely difficult circumstances. There are those here this morning who may have a spouse who no longer is committed to the marriage. Certainly some might think God would not have that person to give thanks to Him in that situation. But what is the will of God for them in Christ Jesus? To give thanks. There are those here this morning who may have lost their job. Certainly some might think God would not have that person to give thanks to Him in this very difficult situation. But what is the will of God for them in Christ Jesus? To give thanks.

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There are those who are here this morning who may have children who have become rebellious and have taken away any satisfaction you may have felt in the parenting role. What is the will of God for them in Christ Jesus? It is to give thanks.

What does **1 Thess. 5:18** tell us? **“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”** HOW SIGNIFICANT IS THIS PRACTICE OF GIVING THANKS TO GOD IN EVERYTHING?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS COMMAND

We need to understand that the practice of giving thanks to God for the good things that come into our lives as well as the bad is at the very core of Christian living. A person who is devoid of this practice would be at least in his behavior more closely identified with the world than with the church of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:18-21) Or in other words the practice of giving thanks to God in everything is one way for an individual, by his behavior, to identify himself as a follower of Christ.

In **Romans 1:18-21** Paul said the following: **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, (19) because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. (20) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (21) For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”** Unsaved people for the most part know God through conscience and creation but they do not honor him as God.

But this is not true of saved people for the most part. Those who are saved are characterized by thanksgiving. They are characterized by the continual giving of thanks to God. Notice how the giving of thanks to God is just assumed in the following passages.

In **1 Cor. 14:16** Paul is giving instructions to the church concerning spiritual gifts and in the midst of these instructions he talks about the need for the church when the gift of tongues is being exercised, to exercise the gift in a certain way, lest the verse says, **“Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? (17) For you are giving thanks well enough , but the other man is not edified.”** What does Paul assume to be present when Christians were gathering? Thanks to God!!

Then in **2 Cor. 4:15** Paul is talking about the increasing numbers of people who are coming to faith in Christ and the resultant fruit of those decisions. What does the verse say? **“For all things are for your sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.”** What does Paul assume people will be doing as they come to faith in Christ? He assumes that they will be expressing thanks to God. What is particularly interesting about this expression of thanksgiving is that it is being done by Christians according to the context who are suffering greatly.

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Why is the practice of thanksgiving to God or the lack of it significant? Because it can tell us a lot about ourselves and our relationship to God. What produces this stark contrast between the world and the church?

THE EXPLANATION OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH

The difference in the way the world responds and the way the church responds is very simple to explain. It is because the world and the church think differently.

How does the world think?

There are many in the world who think that life is dictated by luck. Everything is simply a matter of chance. If this is how a person thinks then when something good happens, he certainly will be grateful, but he also certainly will not be thankful to God. Why should he? He believes that God had nothing to do with what happened.

There are others who think that life is not dictated by luck but rather by fate. Apparently they see life as having been determined by some impersonal force of some kind without any clue as to what this force might be or why this force has acted as it has acted. This way of thinking is very much detached from the concept of a personal God and therefore when something good happens who are they to thank? They have no concept of a personal God.

There are others who believe that they in fact control their lives. These people are inclined to think they are able to make things happen. So they exert themselves and good things happen they are more likely to credit themselves rather than the benevolence of sovereign God who simply has willed it so.

Certainly in light of the way the world thinks it is not surprising at all that the unsaved would be characterized by a lack of thanksgiving to God, not only in difficult times but even in good times. But certainly quite the opposite would be true for the Church of Jesus Christ because the church should be thinking radically different from the world.

How should the church think?

The Church does not view things in life as being orchestrated by chance, or by some impersonal force, or by human effort but rather by a sovereign God who works everything after the counsel of His own will (**Eph. 1:13**).

The verse that best expresses our way of thinking is **Romans 8:28** “**For God work all things together for good to those who are called according to His purpose.**” If we believe that God is sovereignly working, blending every contingency of life to lead to a sovereignly determined goal that ultimately serves our best interest then we can handle anything. In fact we can therefore what? Give thanks in everything.

By our giving thanks in everything we are not saying everything is good but we are saying BY FAITH THAT GOD IS WORKING ALL THINGS TOGETHER FOR GOOD.

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Certainly this is what God did in the life of Joseph. I am sure you remember the story Joseph had been sold into slavery into Egypt. But in time God had placed him in a position of power second only to Pharaoh and from that position was able to literally save his family from starvation. What is particularly interesting is how Joseph viewed the unfolding of all these events which he shares with his brothers in **Gen. 50:19-20** “**But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place? (20) And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”**

The Scripture is clear God is sovereign and He as our sovereign Lord is working out in everything the kind intention of His will in our lives both in time and for eternity. If you understand these things but still struggle with giving thanks in all things then what is the problem? I believe that the problem is clear, we are not taking advantage of the resources which are ours in Christ.

THE RESOURCES TO FULFILL THE COMMAND

Certainly I hope that we see that the will of God for us in Christ Jesus is to give thanks to God in all things whether those things are good or bad. We can intellectually acquiesce to this as reasonable because the Bible tells us that God is working those things together for good in our lives. But though this may be true we are very weak and the ability to be obedient to this command even though we may understand it is not possible unless we are fully yielded to the will of God for our lives.

Let us consider **Eph. 5:18-20**, “**And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, (19) speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; (20) always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.”** Just because we may be able to intellectualize that concept that God is sovereign. Though we can give mental accent to the fact that He is working all things together for good. None of this will produce thanksgiving in all things in our lives unless we are Spirit-filled. Unless we are willing to die to ourselves and our desires to want only His will to be done.

If you are here this morning and you know that God is sovereign and that the Bible tells us that He is working all things after the counsel of his will for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose and yet you do not see thanksgiving flowing from your lips to God both in good times and in bad, what do you have to conclude? I believe that you have to conclude that you are struggling with sin. That you are struggling with the flesh. What do you need to do? You need to confess your sin. You need to deny yourself and take up your cross and follow Him once more in your life.

Certainly this can have a dramatic impact on many areas of your life, but the area that Paul particularly has in view which is God’s will for us in Christ Jesus in is what? **THAT YOU WOULD GIVE THANKS IN ALL THINGS.**

Make a list in your mind of all the things that you find yourself complaining about. Make a list of all the things that you have been grumbling about and purpose before the Lord by His grace to do what? To thank God for those things. By doing this you are not saying that those things are in and of themselves good but by being able to give thanks to Him for these things you are saying that you are trusting Him to do good in your life through these things that you are experiencing.