

Giving Thanks Always for All Things

Text: Ps 136:1-26

Introduction

I. We all understand that God wants His people to be thankful

A. This was true under the old covenant

Ps 50:14 "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving And pay your vows to the Most High;

Ps 92:1 It is good to give thanks to the LORD And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;

B. And it is certainly true under the new

1. Paul told the Ephesians that thanksgiving is a part of what it means to be filled with the Spirit...

Eph 5:18-21 18 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;
21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Phil 4:6-7 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication **with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**
7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Col 2:6-7 6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,
7 having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and **overflowing with gratitude.**

Col 3:15 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and **be thankful.**

Col 3:17 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks** through Him to God the Father.

Col 4:2 2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with **an attitude of thanksgiving;**

1Th 5:16-18 16 Rejoice always;
17 pray without ceasing;
18 **in everything give thanks;** for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Hb 13:15 15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

II. Even the angels in heaven give thanks to God

Rv 7:11-12 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,
12 saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and **thanksgiving** and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

Discussion

I. We All Understand That We Should Be Thankful For So Many Different Things

A. Physical Blessings

1. Sunshine and rain

Ps 147:7-9 7 Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; Sing praises to our God on the lyre,
8 Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who provides rain for the earth, Who makes
grass to grow on the mountains.
9 He gives to the beast its food, And to the young ravens which cry.

2. Food

- 1Tm 4:4 (Speaking of things we eat) 4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude;
- a. Jesus gave thanks for the 5 loaves and 2 fish before He fed the 5,000 (Jn. 6:4-11)
 - b. Jesus gave thanks for the 7 loaves and the fish before He fed the 4,000 (Mt. 15:35-38)
 - c. After 14 days without food during Paul's sea voyage to Rome, he took the time to give thanks for his bread (Acts 27:33-35)
 - (1) I wonder if I would have taken the time to do that before gobbling down my food as fast as I could
 - d. We are blessed, in this regard, for more than most people of the world.
 - (1) Just this past Wednesday, I received this forwarded email from George Harris from a "a worthy brother who does a lot of good and is a true soldier of Christ... (a) wonderful brother and proclaimer of the truth," named, Cristo Croenewald. He wrote to George...

Dear George,

I am so sorry to bother you with my troubles but at this moment I am sitting with big problems. We are sitting without money and also without food. This was a real poor month for us, we cannot keep up. Jean-Pierre is finishing (school) next week. We had to go to Worcester 2 times a week to write exams and that is why we got no money left. We are looking for a place to stay for Herman. Since he's got a job now we won't be able to accommodate him anymore. We also got a 14 year old girl that had problems at home in our (her) house. George I don't expect some money from you but maybe you know of somebody that can help us only this one time. Thank you for understanding. The news letter is on its way and I wonder if you got a email address of the Sims.

Brotherly love, Cristo

3. Financial prosperity

1Ch 29:10-15 10 So David blessed the LORD in the sight of all the assembly; and David said, "Blessed are You, O LORD God of Israel our father, forever and ever.
11 "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all.
12 "Both **riches** and **honor** come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone.

13 "Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name.

14 "But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You.

15 "For we are sojourners before You, and tenants, as all our fathers were; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope.

4. **Physical healing**

- a. When Jesus healed the ten lepers, only a Samaritan came back to thank Him (Lk 17:15-16)

5. **Deliverance**

P_s 18:46-49 46 The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock; And exalted be the God of my salvation,
47 The God who executes vengeance for me, And subdues peoples under me.
48 He delivers me from my enemies; Surely You lift me above those who rise up against me; You rescue me from the violent man.
49 Therefore I will give thanks to You among the nations, O LORD, And I will sing praises to Your name.

B. **Our Spiritual Blessings**

1. **God's greatness**

P_s 95:1-3 1 O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.
2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.
3 For the LORD is a great God And a great King above all gods,

2. **God's grace**

P_s 30:4-5 4 Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones, And give thanks to His holy name.
5 For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning.

- a. God's grace is His unmerited favor
(1) God's grace gives us what we don't deserve

3. **God's goodness and mercy**

1Chr 16:34 34 O give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

- a. God's mercy withholds from us what we do deserve

4. **God's abiding truth**

P_s 100:4-5 4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.
5 For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations.

- a. How thankful we should be that God's word has been preserved for 3500 years and we have such easy access to it in this country

5. **The effectual working of God's word in the lives of others...**

1Th 2:13 13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

6. **The faith and love of our brethren...**

Rm 1:8 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

Eph 1:15-16 15 For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints,
16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;

Col 1:3-5 3 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,
4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints;
5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel

1Th 1:2-4 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;
3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,
4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;

1Th 3:6-10 6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you,
7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith;
8 for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord.
9 For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account,
10 as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?

7. **Our salvation in Christ...**

Rm 7:21-25 21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.
22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,
23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.
24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?
25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Col 1:12-14 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.
13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,
14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

8. **Our joy in God...**

Ps 30:11-12 11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness,
12 That my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

9. **Our fellowship in the gospel...**

Phil 1:3-6 3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,
4 always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all,
5 in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.
6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

- (1) Paul was alluding to the financial support that the church in Philippi has sent to him
- (2) But we have fellowship with one another in the gospel in other ways

10. **Our victory over death through Christ...**

1Co 15:56-57 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;
57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

11. **The conversion of others...**

Rm 6:17 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,

12. **The spiritual growth of others...**

2Th 1:3 3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;

II. But Now I Want To Help You Think About Being Thankful For Some Things That We Might Not Ordinarily Be Thankful For...

- A. I'm reminded of the story of a young boy in a Bible class. He had lost both his mother and grandmother in recent weeks. And, as you can imagine, this brought a lot of sadness into his life. Compounding his heartache, other things had happened that combined to make life hard, real hard.

The Bible class teacher had been talking about Thanksgiving and being thankful and, at the end of class, the boy raised his hand and asked if he could lead the closing prayer. The teacher said "yes," but wondered how the boy would pray.

He prayed, "Dear Lord, thank you for all of our blessings and for all of our not-so blessings." Sometimes we need to be thankful "for all of our not-so blessings."

B. Dr. Laura Schlessinger, on her popular radio show, presented a piece entitled, “I Am Thankful...”...

I am thankful...

... for the wife who says it's hot dogs tonight. She is home with me, not with someone else.

... for the husband who is on the sofa, who is being a couch potato. He is home with me and not out at the bars.

... for the teenager who is complaining about doing dishes, because that means she is at home, not on the streets.

... for the taxes that I pay, because it means that I am employed.

... for the mess to clean after a party, because it means that I have been surrounded by friends.

... for the clothes that fit a little too snug, because it means I have enough to eat.

... for my shadow that watches me work, because it means I am out in the sunshine.

... for a lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning, and gutters that need fixing, because it means I have a home.

... for all the complaining I hear about the government, because it means that we have freedom of speech.

... for the parking spot I find at the far end of the parking lot, because it means I am capable of walking and that I have been blessed with transportation.

... for the lady behind me in church that sings off key, because it means that I can hear.

... for the pile of laundry and ironing, because it means I have clothes to wear.

... for weariness and aching muscles at the end of the day, because it means I have been capable of working hard.

... for the alarm that goes off in the early morning hours, because it means that I am alive.

... and finally... for so much e-mail and/or faxes, because it means I have friends who are thinking of me.

... send this to someone you care about . . . I just did.

C. **Hard Times**

1. Hard times can produce godly character...

**Rm 5:3-5 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;
4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;
5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

- a. Helen Keller: “Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”

2. Adversity often carries with it the seeds of unexpected blessings. *If it hadn't been for the boll weevil, a lot of farmers would never have become wealthy growing peanuts!*

- a. "Fruits Of Affliction" — Dan S. Shipley (Plain Talk, May, 1979, 16:3:3)

On Dec. 11, 1919, the citizens of Enterprise, Alabama, dedicated a most unusual kind of monument on the main street of their city. It was a monument to a pest! — to the boll weevil. In 1915 the Mexican boll weevil had disastrously invaded the southeast portion of Alabama, destroying a big portion of the cotton crop. As cotton was the economic mainstay of that area, the effects were immediate and devastating. But what appeared to be an almost ungetoverable calamity turned out to be a great blessing — because it forced the farmers to turn to diversified farming which included raising peanuts. By 1917 Coffee county harvested more peanuts than any other county in the nation. What had looked like a great loss only paved the way for unexpected prosperity. No wonder these fortunate people saw fit to show their appreciation for the lowly boll weevil!

As this story so aptly illustrates, adversity often carries with it the seeds of unexpected blessings. We see it in the life of Joseph whose misfortune of being sold into slavery by his brothers proved a great blessing for Israel. Spiritual Israel too, was born from the darkest hour in human history. From the cross comes the crown; from the curse, the blessing (Gal. 3:13). Persecutions scattered the early Christians and thus contributed to the greatest growth ever experienced by the Lord's church. Even Paul's imprisonment promoted the progress of the gospel (Phil. 1:12-14). "Sweet are the uses of adversity, which, like a toad, though ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in its head" (Shakespeare).

However, the "sweetness" and blessings of adversity are not apparent to all. Some, in fact, not only fail to see any good from their troubles, they react with bitterness and resentment. As with the boat, it is the "set of the sail" that determines our course, even in contrary and unfavorable winds. The Psalmist says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted..." (119:71). Adversity can be good for us — it can be an effective teacher, but only when we are receptive students — like the apostle Paul, for instance.

For lesser men, Paul's thorn in the flesh may have served as an excuse for doing less. But he accepted affliction as a benefit — "that I should not be exalted overmuch". He could even say, "I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Cor. 12:7,10). Like Paul, we can learn important lessons in the school of affliction — especially the lesson of humility. Adversity has a way of revealing our littleness and insufficiency. It enhances our appreciation for concerned friends, both earthly and heavenly. In Christ we learn to evaluate our afflictions as being light, temporary, and beneficial (2 Cor. 4:17).

"Boll weevils" of affliction will continue to come — even to the best of God's people. With an attitude of defeat and despair, we only compound their bad effects. But with the eye of faith we can see and appropriate something good from most all of our misfortunes.

- b. There was a silver lining behind the clouds of Joseph's adversity (Gen. 45:5, 7-8; 50:15ff, 20-21)

3. Shouldn't we be thankful for hard times if they do this for us?

D. Persecution

Mt 5:10-12 10 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

12 "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

1. Now our persecution must be “for righteousness’ sake.” One might be persecuted for other reasons
2. But persecution for righteousness’ sake:
 - a. Can be an indication that we are faithfully serving the Lord...

Lk 6:26 26 "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

 - (1) If we are faithfully serving God, we will be persecuted...

2Tm 3:12 12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
 - (2) Wicked people will:
 - (a) Embrace us if we live like they do
 - (b) Ignore us if we leave them alone
 - (c) Persecute us if we take a stand against their wickedness
 - b. Provides an opportunity for us to pray for our enemies (Mt. 5:44)
 - c. Provides an opportunity for us to demonstrate the gentle spirit of Christ (1 Cor. 4:12; 2 Cor. 4:7-12)
 - d. Provides an opportunity for us to demonstrate godly character...

2Th 1:3-5 3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;
4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.
5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.
 - e. Could provide an opportunity for the spread of the gospel
 - (1) That’s what happened in the first century (cf. Acts 8:1-4; 11:19-21)
 - f. Puts us in good company
 - (1) The prophets
 - (2) Our Lord...

In 15:20 20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.
3. Shouldn’t we be thankful for something that can accomplish all of these things?

E. **The Chastening Of The Lord...**

Hb 12:5-11 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;

6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

1. God chastens those He loves (Heb. 12:5-6)
2. God's chastening is an indication of your sonship (Heb. 12:7-8)
3. God chastens us for our profit, so that we may be partakers of His holiness (Heb. 12:10)
4. God's chastening will yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Heb. 12:11)
5. Shouldn't we be thankful for the chastening of the Lord if it accomplishes all of those things?

F. **The Rebuke Of A Friend...**

Pr 27:5-6 5 Better is open rebuke Than love that is concealed.

6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

1. Many years ago, Bro. Bob Crawley made the statement that it wasn't the commentators that he agreed with that really helped him (or helped him the most) it was the ones who didn't and showed him where he was wrong or mistaken
2. Think about how thankful:
 - a. Apollos, no doubt, was for the instruction that he received from Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:24-26)
 - b. Peter was for Paul's rebuke (Gal. 2:11-14)
3. Do I ever step on your toes and make you feel guilty? When that happens, are you thankful? You should be.

Pr 9:8 8 Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, Reprove a wise man and he will love you.

Pr 13:18 18 Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline, But he who regards reproof will be honored.

Pr 15:32 32 He who neglects discipline despises himself, But he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.

4. You should be thankful because it means:
 - a. I love you
 - b. I'm trying to help you improve
 - c. I'm trying to prune you so that you will bear more fruit...

Jn 15:2 2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

- d. I'm trying to help you become more like Jesus

G. Opportunities To Serve

1Tm 1:12-17 12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,
 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;
 14 and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.
 15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.
 16 Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.
 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

1. Paul was not just thankful for his salvation; he was thankful for the opportunity to serve
2. Service can be hard and inconvenient and even painful
 - a. It was for Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 11:23-29)
3. But service:
 - a. Makes us like Jesus...

Mt 20:28 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

(1) Shouldn't we be thankful for anything that makes us like Jesus?

- b. Makes us great in the kingdom...

Mk 10:41-44 41 Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John.
 42 Calling them to Himself, Jesus said* to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them.
 43 "But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant;
 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.

(1) Shouldn't we be thankful for anything that makes us great in the kingdom?

- c. Helps us develop the godly qualities of humility and patience and perseverance, etc.

(1) Shouldn't we be thankful for anything that helps us develop godly qualities in our life?

H. Unanswered Prayer

1. I don't really believe there is such a thing as "unanswered prayer" for the faithful Christian. It's just that sometimes God's answer is "Yes" and sometimes it's "No" and sometimes it's "Not now"
2. So when I say "unanswered prayer," I'm speaking accomodatively. I'm talking about those times when God has said "No" to our requests
3. I'm sure that all of us can look back on our lives and see now that we're thankful God said "No" to some of our requests
4. The apostle Paul prayed earnestly that his thorn in the flesh might be removed. God said "No," and Paul came to see the benefit in God's answer (2Co 12:7-10)

Conclusion

I. Someone once wrote, "Be Thankful..."

Be thankful that you don't already have everything you desire. If you did, what would there be to look forward to?

Be thankful when you don't know something. For it gives you the opportunity to learn.

Be thankful for your limitations. Because they give you opportunities for improvement.

Be thankful for the difficult times. During those times you grow as a person.

Be thankful for each new challenge. Because it will build your strength and character.

Be thankful for your mistakes. They will teach you valuable lessons.

Be thankful when you're tired and weary. Because it means you've made a difference.

It's easy to be thankful for the good things. A life of rich fulfillment comes to those who are also thankful for the setbacks.

Gratitude can turn a negative into a positive. Find a way to be thankful for your troubles and they can become your blessings. Everyone crosses the finish line, winners just find a better way to get there.

-- *via Family Report, Sept. 7, 2003.*

II. Col 3:17 **Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.**