

## ***“Be Grateful”***

### **1 Thessalonians 5:18**

It was on October 3, 1863 during the height of the Civil War that President Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving to be a National holiday. Amidst 50,000 fallen soldiers, destroyed battlegrounds, and an entire population at odds with each other President declared challenged and called the American people to give thanks. It would appear my brothers and sisters that many of us are in such a rush that I believe we haven't paused to take out time to give God thanks. Just a few weeks ago I was in Dallas, Tx spending time with my two nieces and one of my cousins and we began to discuss how we've noticed that the shelves in many stores are already filled with Christmas items. Many of us are a witness that prior to Halloween being over Christmas items were already on store shelves.

Many of us have already put up decorations, taken out your Christmas tree, hung ornaments, and wrapped gifts and we've barely made it to the middle of October. I myself made a personal declaration that I wasn't going to start celebrating Christmas until at least Thanksgiving night or the following weekend. However, right in my own house just last week to my surprise and shame my own mother and daughter had a change of plans. When we should be talking about thanksgiving menus and what we are going to eat on that day my family began to take out decorations, hang lights, my daughter wrote out her Christmas wish list, and they even had me going to the shed pulling out the Christmas tree. Here it is many of us have skipped over thanksgiving and have already made preparations for Christmas, but I want to encourage us this morning that although there is nothing wrong with being excited and preparing for Christmas we should always pause to give God thanks.

Paul writes this letter to the church of Thessalonica and several Christians in the area to let them know that he thanks God for them and to also encourage them. At the writing of this letter this particular church was only about three years old so they were new to the faith, had several questions that needed to be answered, and on top of that they were also being persecuted. One of the questions that these new believers had was concerning what happens when their loved ones die. Many of them believed that they would live to see the second coming of the Lord, however, when their family and friends began to die and Jesus had not yet returned they had questions concerning his return and their loved ones. Paul then encouraged them in chapter 4 to let them know that not only will Christ return but when he returns he's also going to bring our loved ones back with him. In other words, there is going to be a reunion in the air. But in chapter 5 Paul gives this young church several different commands and one of them is to give thanks.

You see God wants us as believers to live grateful lives but in order to be grateful it's both a skillset and a mindset. If you can get your mind to focus on being grateful then you can make your body start to be grateful. You see if you can think then you should be able to thank. Have ever paused a moment to think about the goodness of Jesus and all he's done for you? I mean have you ever really paused to think about the many blessings that the Lord has sent your way? I guarantee you that if you just take a minute and begin to reflect over where the Lord has brought

you from and what all he has brought you through I guarantee that you'll start to feel better. You see sometimes we think that our situation is just so bad, but maybe you should take a minute and go visit a nursing home, a prison, or a mental institution and you'll start to be grateful.

**1. The Discipline of Thanksgiving:** Paul first shows us The Discipline of Thanksgiving. We need to understand it take spiritual discipline to be grateful. Paul didn't say to give thanks because of everything, but he did say to give thanks in everything. You see we all will one day experience somethings that we can't say "Lord thank you because of it" but we can say "Lord thank you" while we're in it. No child of God I don't thank the Lord for this Pandemic, but I can tell the Lord thank you while I'm in it. You show discipline in your thanksgiving when even though the Lord hasn't brought you out of it, you can still give God thanks while you in it.

You see its easy to tell the Lord thank you once he's brought you out of it, and its easy to tell the Lord thank you once you're now on the other side of it, but God wants to know can you still give him glory while you're in it. Its easy to give God praise when all of your bills are paid but can you still praise God when your bills are past due and your checking account says insufficient funds. Its easy to tell the Lord thank you when your health is fine but can you still give God a thank you when the doctors say you might have cancer, or you sick and it seem like you can't get well. One of the signs of spiritual maturity is when you can give God praise and you can tell Him thank you when that's all you really have to give Him.

Now here it is these Christians in Thessalonica who are young in the faith are confused, they're being persecuted, they've lost friends and loved ones, yet Paul says to tell God thank you while you're in it. Because if you can give God praise while you're in your storm just imagine how you gone praise God once he brings you out of it, and I want to suggest that if you learn to tell God thank you while you in it, your attitude of gratitude can move the Lord to bring you out of it. I wish I had a church in here that can help me testify that I may be in it and going through it now but I've made up in my mind that I'm gone keep on praising God and telling God thank you until he brings me out of this.

I know sometimes we get caught up in throwing a pity party and we have this woe is me complex but sometimes you just need to wake up in the morning and don't ask God for anything but just start telling Him thank you for everything. I guarantee you that if you just start telling God thank you you'll start to realize that you are far more blessed than what you think. If you can pause and tell God thank you you'll begin to realize that your good days out weigh your bad days. Learn to thank God for the small victories such as: breath in your body, activity your limbs, food in the refrigerator, family that loves you, a roof over your head, clothes on your back, a job to go, children that get on your nerves. The problem with some of us is that we spend the majority of our lives and time comparing our situations to somebody else, but you have to learn to be content with where you are and with what the Lord has blessed you with and learn to tell God thank you despite the situation that you find yourself in. Be grateful.

**2. The Desire for Thanksgiving:** Paul shows us first The Discipline of Thanksgiving but next he shows us The Desire for Thanksgiving. Paul says that this is the will of God concerning you. Do you know what makes God happy? We as believers make God happy when we give him glory

and tell him thank you even though he hasn't brought us out of our present situation yet. Paul lets us know that this is the will of God for you life, for you to be grateful even in uncomfortable situations. I know many of us are praying for the Lord to bring us out of this and to deliver us from certain situations but it could be that the reason why God hasn't brought you out yet isn't because he's punishing you but because he's developing you.

We're quickly approaching thanksgiving and I know some of us are making preparations for our sweet potato pies, peach cobbler, and homemade pound cakes but its something interesting about all three of those desserts. All of them need to be baked in an oven somewhere between 350-400 degrees. Now if you pull it out of the oven to soon its going to be undone and mucky, but if you pull it out to late its going to be dried out and hard. For every dessert there is an appointed time that you have to take it out of the oven so that it can taste and be at its best. Well, sometimes in our spiritual lives God has to place us in the oven and sometimes the oven is very uncomfortable. The oven is hot, its uncomfortable, it doesn't feel good and you really want the Lord to bring you out of the heat as soon as possible but God already knows that if he take you ought to soon you'll be undone, and if he lets you stay to long than you'll be hard, but he knows just when to bring you out of the heat. You just need to learn to tell God thank you because when he does bring you ought you're going to come out better than when you went in there.

Let me throw this in the gumbo while I'm standing over the pot. All of us have made the mistake of becoming preoccupied while cooking. Some of us become preoccupied by watching television and some of us even fall asleep while cooking, but I'm so glad that we serve a God that his eyes don't get heavy while we are in the hot ovens of this life and just when we feel as if God has forsaken us or forgotten about us that's when he'll show up and bring us out but you just need to make sure that you keep telling the Lord thank you while you in it.

**3. The Disciple of Thanksgiving:** We've seen The Discipline of Thanksgiving, The Desire for Thanksgiving, but finally let's see The Disciple of Thanksgiving. Paul brings this command to a close by saying that this is the will or desire of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Now when Paul writes this letter and gives this command he isn't talking to nonbelievers but he's talking to the house of faith. He's talking to Christians. You see the reason why some people can't be grateful and give God thanks is because they not in Christ. That's why you got those people that's always complaining, if its not one thing its another, they never have a good day, they always sick and they never feeling good. A good sign that they not in Christ is the fact that they always complaining and they talk like they defeated, but when you a disciple of Christ and you know you in Christ we have a different conversation.

We can live grateful lives and have grateful conversations because even though we in it we have a different perspective from the world that sooner or later God is going to turn it around in our favor. The world says that its not going to get any better and that all hope is lost but the disciple say's "weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." The world says that everything is doom and gloom but a disciple say's that "no weapon formed against me is going to prosper." Real disciples learn to give God thanks because we know we serve a good that even while we're in it he's still good, faithful, just, merciful, and kind. I wish I had somebody

that could help me testify that even on my worse day I got enough to be thankful for and to thank God about. Don't allow this season to pass you by and don't rush to get to Christmas to take this time to learn to be grateful and practice gratefulness everyday of your life. Be grateful.