

“In Everything Give Thanks”
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. We considered last time that to be useful to the Lord, we need to cultivate patience – we need to learn to wait on the Lord, even when that waiting is difficult, without complaining.
 - a. This is what the saints did.
 - b. This is what He commands.
 - c. It is a fruit of the Spirit.
 - d. And so also of love.

2. As long as we’re in this world, we’ll have to face difficult times.
 - a. This is part of the Lord’s plan to help us to grow and mature.
 - b. It’s the path He has chosen to bring us to glory.
 - c. And so let’s learn to wait on Him and know by faith He will work good out of our trials.

B. Preview.

1. This evening, let’s move on to another godly characteristic that will make us more useful to the Lord: Thankfulness.
 - a. Something that we’ll be spending a great deal of time doing in heaven will be praising and thanking God.
 - b. Sometimes we forget that the Lord wants us to begin that activity here.
 - (i) The Hebrew word for giving thanks comes from a root that means to shoot at.
 - (ii) One thing we should not forget to do as Christians – as those who have received so much of the Lord’s mercy – is to be shooting our praise and thanksgiving up to heaven every day in every one of our circumstances.

2. Let’s consider three things:
 - a. The characteristics of godly praise.
 - b. How we can know our praise is godly.
 - c. Finally, how to cultivate godly praise.

II. Sermon.

A. First, let’s consider four characteristics of godly thankfulness:

1. First, it’s something only true believers can do.
 - a. Everyone is commanded to praise God, and everyone can go through the motions – even the wicked.
 - (i) They can talk about God, as we do.
 - (ii) They can quote Scripture.

- (iii) They can profess the true religion – even the devil appears as an angel of light.
 - (iv) They can believe the Scripture is true – the devils believe and tremble (James 2:19).
 - (v) They can sing praises to God.
 - (vi) But they can't do this from the heart.
 - (a) Unbelievers are dead in sin – though they can love a god of their own making, they hate the true God.
 - (b) You can't really be thankful to someone you hate.
 - (c) Watson writes, "A profane man with God's praises is like a dunghill with flowers. Praise in the mouth of a sinner, is like a proverb in the mouth of a fool. How unfitting it is for anyone to praise God – if his whole life dishonors God! It is as indecent for a wicked man to praise God, as it is for a thief to talk of living by faith, or for the devil to quote Scripture. The godly alone are fit to be choristers in God's praises."
 - (d) Anyone can praise Him, but not everyone can praise Him in a way He will accept.
- b. Only the righteous can do this. "Praise is becoming for the upright (Ps. 33:1).
- (i) Only the righteous truly love Him.
 - (ii) Only the righteous bring their thanksgiving through Jesus.
 - (iii) This is the reason the Lord receives our praise.
 - (iv) This makes it lovely in God's eyes.
2. The second characteristic of godly praise is that it doesn't have self in view, but God.
- a. When we pray – at least in our supplications and intercession – we come to God because we need or want something.
 - b. But praise is something we give to God.
 - (i) Many "praise" God because they hope to gain something from Him. Most false religion is based on this principle.
 - (ii) But godly praise is based on something already given – God, out of His mercy gives, and we out of thankful hearts praise.
3. Third, godly thanksgiving glorifies God. "He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me" (Ps. 50:23).
- a. This follows from the previous point: praise is giving to God.
 - b. What do we give Him? Glory.
 - (i) We're not adding to His glory; it's already infinite.
 - (ii) Rather, we're exalting Him in the eyes of others.
 - (iii) Praise is lifting up His name, displaying His goodness, proclaiming His excellence to others and each other.
 - (iv) This kind of giving honors Him.
4. A fourth characteristic of godly thankfulness is that it's universal.

- a. Paul writes, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16).
 - b. Temples are where God’s praises are lifted up, and that’s what we are.
 - (i) We should never grow tired of praising God: David writes, “His praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Ps. 34:1).
 - (ii) Not just when His mercies are new, but continually, “I will sing praises to God while I have my being” (Ps. 146:2).
 - (iii) We should mix our thanksgiving in our prayers (Phil. 4:6).
 - (iv) We should thank Him at all times and in all circumstances, as our text reminds us, “In everything give thanks” (1 Thes. 5:18).
 - (a) For the His mercies when things go well.
 - (b) For His discipline, knowing it will make us more like God.
 - (c) For the trials that draw us nearer to God.
 - (d) When the devil struck Job, Job didn’t curse God, but praised Him, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will return. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away; blessed by the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).
- B. Let’s consider, second, how we can know our thanksgiving is genuine.
1. We can know we’re truly thankful when we thank Him for all His mercies.
 - a. There are two things we should always remember: our sins and the Lord’s mercies.
 - (i) Our sins to humble us; and His mercies to keep us thankful.
 - (ii) His mercies should be precious to us – we should always want to remember them.
 - (iii) One of the greatest sins of Israel was that they soon forgot His works (Ps. 106:13).
 - b. A godly heart doesn’t forget, but remembers and tells others.
 - (i) David writes, “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together” (34:3).
 - (ii) Long enough to pass them on to our children, “O God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us the work that You did in their days, in the days of old” (Ps. 44:1).
 2. We can know our thankfulness is genuine when we thank Him from our hearts and not just with our mouths.
 - a. The psalmist writes, “I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart” (111:1).
 - b. If our praise isn’t mixed with love, it means nothing to Him, “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1).
 3. We can know our thankfulness is genuine when the mercies we receive make us love Him more.

- a. The psalmist writes, “I love the Lord, because He hears my voice and my supplications” (Ps. 116:1).
 - b. It’s one thing to love God’s mercies, but another to love the Lord for His mercies.
 - c. We must love the Lord more than His mercies and more for His mercies.
4. Fourth, we can know our thankfulness is genuine when we know in our hearts that we really don’t deserve His mercies, as Jacob, who, when he thought of the Lord’s dealings with him, said, “I am not worthy the least of all the mercies you have shown your servant” (Gen. 32:10).
 5. Fifth, we can know our thanksgiving is genuine when we not only thank Him with our voices and hearts, but also with our service.
 - a. If when He blesses us with health, we use that strength to serve Him.
 - b. When He gives us wealth, we honor Him first from that wealth.
 - c. When He gives us children, we do our best to educate them and point them to God.
 - d. When He gives us talents, not to bury them, but use them for His glory.
 - e. Watson tells us a gracious heart is like good soil, when it receives the seed of mercy, it produces a crop of obedience.
- C. Finally, let’s consider how we can be more thankful.
1. The best way to cultivate thankfulness is to cultivate humility.
 - a. To understand what we really deserve – hell – to know this isn’t what He’s given us.
 - b. At the same time, we need to consider what He has given us instead.
 - c. This will go a long way in increasing our thankfulness.
 2. Paul was one of the most thankful men who ever lived.
 - a. Why? “I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy” (1 Tim. 1:13).
 - b. Pride makes us discontent – I don’t deserve this! But humility breeds a thankful heart.
 3. Let’s strive to be more thankful.
 - a. Murmuring is sin, but praise is good in God’s eyes: “It is good to sing praises to our God” (Ps. 147:1).
 - b. This is what we owe Him for everything He gives us: whether the thing is good in and of itself, or whether the Lord works good from it.
 - (i) This is what we owe Him for making us.
 - (ii) How much more for the good He shows us in this life and the life to come?
 - c. Thankfulness is how we can receive more mercy.
 - (i) When the Lord gives, and we are ungrateful or take Him for granted, He may remove His mercies until He teaches us to be more thankful.

- (ii) Ingratitude is one of the worst sins. Watson writes, “It is reported of Julius Caesar that he would never forgive an ungrateful person. Though God is a sin-pardoning God, he scarcely knows how to pardon for this. ‘How shall I pardon you for this? your children have forsaken me, when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery’ (Jer. 5:7). Draco [7th Century BC, Athenian lawmaker who prescribed death for just about every offense] (whose laws were written in blood) published an edict that if any man had received a benefit from another, and it could be proved against him that he had not been grateful for it, he should be put to death. An unthankful person is a monster in nature – and a paradox in Christianity. He is the scorn of heaven and the plague of earth. An ungrateful man never does well, except in one thing – that is, when he dies. Then he becomes a monument of God's justice.”
- (iii) The Lord brings judgment on nations and on individuals primarily because of ingratitude.
- (iv) Do you want to keep the mercies the Lord has given you and gain more? Remember to thank Him.
- (v) Let’s especially remember to thank Him as He reminds us of His mercy at the Table.

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