

# 1 Thessalonians 5:18 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

- [1 Thes 5:1](#)
- [1 Thes 5:2](#)
- [1 Thes 5:3](#)
- [1 Thes 5:4](#)
- [1 Thes 5:5](#)
- [1 Thes 5:6](#)
- [1 Thes 5:7](#)
- [1 Thes 5:8](#)
- [1 Thes 5:9](#)
- [1 Thes 5:10](#)
- [1 Thes 5:11](#)
- [1 Thes 5:12](#)
- [1 Thes 5:13](#)
- [1 Thes 5:14](#)
- [1 Thes 5:15](#)
- [1 Thes 5:16](#)
- [1 Thes 5:17](#)
- [1 Thes 5:18](#)
- [1 Thes 5:19](#)
- [1 Thes 5:20](#)
- [1 Thes 5:21](#)
- [1 Thes 5:22](#)
- [1 Thes 5:23](#)
- [1 Thes 5:24](#)
- [1 Thes 5:25](#)
- [1 Thes 5:26](#)
- [1 Thes 5:27](#)
- [1 Thes 5:28](#)

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN  
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 Chart by Charles Swindoll

1 Thessalonians				
Overview				
1 Th 1:1-10	1 Th 2:1-20	1 Th 3:1-13	1 Th 4:1-18	1 Th 5:1-28
LOOKING BACK			LOOKING FORWARD	
Personal Reflections History			Practical Instructions Hortatory	
Ministry In Person		Ministry in Absentia (Thru Timothy)	Ministry by Epistle	
Word and Power of the Spirit		Establishing & Comforting	Calling & Conduct	1Th 4:13ff Comfort
				1Th 5:12ff Commands

1 Salvation	2 Service	3 Sanctification	4 Sorrow	5 Sobriety
Paul Commends Spiritual Growth	Paul Finds the Church	Strengthening of the Church	Directions for Spiritual Growth	Holy Living in Light of Day of the Lord
Exemplary Hope of Young Converts	Motivating Hope of Faithful Servants	Purifying Hope of Tried Believers	Comforting Hope of Bereaved Saints	Invigorating Hope of Diligent Christians
Written from Corinth Approximately 51AD				

1Thessalonians 5:18 in [everything give thanks](#) for [this](#) is [God's will](#) for you in [Christ Jesus](#). (NASB: Lockman)

**Greek:** [en panti eucharisteite; \(2PPAM\) touto gar thelema theou en Christo lesou eis humas](#)

**Amplified:** Thank [God] in everything [no matter what the circumstances may be, be thankful and give thanks], for this is the will of God for you [who are] in Christ Jesus [the Revealer and Mediator of that will]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

**NIV:** give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

**NLT:** No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Be thankful, whatever the circumstances may be. If you follow this advice you will be working out the will of God expressed to you in Jesus Christ. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** In everything be giving thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (Eerdmans)

**Young's Literal:** in every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus in regard to you.

**IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS:** [en panti eucharisteite \(2PPAM\):](#)

- Ephesians 5:20; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 3:17; Job 1:21; Psalms 34:1; Hebrews 13:15
- 1 Thes 4:3; 1 Peter 2:15; 1 Pe 4:2; 1 Jn 2:17
- 1 Thessalonians 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [1 Thessalonians 5:18 Giving Thanks in Everything](#) - John MacArthur
- [1 Thessalonians 5:18 In Everything Give Thanks](#) - John MacArthur

## AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

**Ruth Bell Graham** - We can't always give thanks *FOR* everything, but we can always give thanks *IN* everything.

**Willis P. King** observes that "[Gratitude](#) is from the same root word as "[grace](#)," which signifies the free and boundless mercy of God. Thanksgiving is from the same root work as "think," so that to think is to thank."

**C. H. Spurgeon** rightly quipped that "The heart must be alive with gracious gratitude, or the leaf cannot long be green with living holiness." **Spurgeon** elsewhere admits that "I have not always found it easy to practice this duty; this I confess to my shame. When suffering extreme pain some time ago, a brother in Christ said to me, "Have you thanked God for this?" I replied that I desired to be patient, and would be thankful to recover. "But," said he, "in everything give thanks, not after it is over, but while you are still in it, and perhaps when you are enabled to give thanks for the severe pain, it will cease." I believe that there was much force in that good advice. (**Ed note:** I agree but would add that even if the pain doesn't cease, one's heart assumes a proper perspective to pain).

Thanksgiving leads to Thanksliving.

**Paul** exhorts the saints at Colossae to continually practice a God "aligned" attitude of gratitude...

**Whatever you do** in word (lips) or deed (life), do **all** (Greek = pas = same word in 1Th 5:18) in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks through Him** (study) to God the Father. (Colossians 3:17-note)

The prime **OT illustration** of this supernatural response even in the face of overwhelming troubles (If you think you're experiencing trials and afflictions read Job 1:13, 14,15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20) is **Job** who...

said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21)

**Comment:** Beloved, if this affirmation of Job does not convict you (And be sure and read Job 1:22 if you're feeling smug! cp Php 2:14-note), then you must already be glorified! And remember the OT saints **did not** have the incredible resource we NT believers possess - the indwelling Holy Spirit (Ro 8:9-note)!

**David** steadfastly affirmed...

I will bless the Lord **at all times**. His praise shall **continually** be in my mouth. (Psalm 34:1)

**Spurgeon comments: I will bless the Lord at all times.** He is resolved and fixed, **I will** (**Ed:** God won't force us to choose thankfulness. It comes down to a choice, but even that choice is motivated by His indwelling Spirit as in Php 2:13-note); he is personally and for himself determined, let others so as they may; he is **intelligent in head** and **inflamed in heart** -- he knows to Whom the praise is due, and what is due, and for what and when.

To **Jehovah**, and not to second causes our gratitude is to be rendered. The Lord hath by right a monopoly in His creatures praise. Even when a mercy may remind us of our sin with regard to it, as in this case David's deliverance from the Philistine monarch was sure to do, we are not to rob God of His meed (a fitting return or recompense) of honour because our conscience justly awards a censure to our share in the transaction. Though the hook was rusty, yet God sent the fish, and we thank Him for it.

**At all times, in every situation, under every circumstance, before, in and after trials, in bright days of glee, and dark nights of fear.**

He would never have done praising, because never satisfied that he had done enough; always feeling that he fell short of the Lord's deservings.

Happy is he whose fingers  
are wedded to his harp.

He who praises God for mercies  
shall never want a mercy for which to praise.

To bless the Lord is never unseasonable. **His praise shall continually be in my mouth**, not in my heart merely, but in my mouth too.

**Our thankfulness is not to be a dumb thing; it should be one of the daughters of music. Our tongue is our glory, and it ought to reveal the glory of God.**

What a blessed mouthful is God's praise! How sweet, how purifying, how perfuming! If men's mouths were always thus filled, there would be no repining against God, or slander of neighbours.

**If we continually rolled this dainty morsel under our tongue, the bitterness of daily affliction would be swallowed up in joy.**

God deserves blessing with the heart, and extolling with the mouth --

**good thoughts in the closet  
and  
good words in the world.**

**So how does one emulate and exercise this Davidic attitude of gratitude?...**

**Through Him** (through Christ, our Great High Priest - see study of through Him = through Christ) then, let us **continually** offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips (What does this imply? As physical fruit is borne by abiding, so spiritual fruit is borne by us abiding in Christ and His Spirit in us - Gal 5:22-note, Gal 5:23-note, Jn 15:5) that **give thanks** to His Name. (Hebrews 13:15-note)

**Chrysostom** "gave a practical illustration of this heroic temper by repeating (this attitude of gratitude), as he died in the extreme

hardships of an enforced and painful exile. ([Quoted by James Moffatt in 1Thessalonians 5 Commentary](#))

#### See Related Resources:

- Exposition of Ephesians 5:20 (Eph 5:20)
- Exposition of Philippians 4:6 (Php 4:6)

A great many Christians although familiar with this command, have looked on it as a sort of counsel of perfection which is out of reach of most of us mere mortals. We offer our own practical paraphrase of Paul's command saying something like "in most things give thanks" or "in some things give thanks" or "give thanks when you feel like it"! Let's be honest, there are times when the thought of giving thanks is the farthest thought from our mind. We would rather grumble and/or complain. And often we have a "legitimate" (in the world's way of looking at things) reason to gripe. And so we arrive at a "spiritual stalemate" because we really don't want to do what Paul is commanding. It is at times like this what we need to remember the basic spiritual "law" that God never asks us to do something that He doesn't enable us to accomplish. Thanksgiving is often an act of sheer faith. Our intellect says "get upset and complain." But the Spirit says, "give thanks in all things and at all times." If we respond to the Spirit in faith (God allowed it and He will cause it to work out for good) and genuinely give thanks (not legalistically but enabled by amazing grace), we are blessed. We will cease fretting and a beautiful joy and confidence in God sets in. Admittedly this describes the ideal response, and yet one that is within the reach of every believer because we all possess the Spirit and access to just the necessary amount of grace.

The opposite of **giving thanks in all things** is grumbling or murmuring, an attitude and response Paul addressed in his letter to the Philippians...

**Do** all things without grumbling or disputing; **15** (Paul explains why this response is so important) that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, **16** holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. (See **notes** Philippians 2:14; 15; 16)

**Comment:** Notice that "non-grumbling" is not optional and is not just a suggestion. Paul is commanding "non-grumbling" to be the believer's continual response [present imperative]! Remember that when you murmur about your circumstances, in the final analysis, you are murmuring against the One Who has designed every circumstance of your life. So when the urge to murmur comes over you [the old **flesh** will always urge you in that direction - see Gal 5:17-note], remember that you need to view the adverse circumstances with eyes of faith and an eternal perspective [cf 2Cor 4:16, 17, 18], asking the question "Is God still on the throne?" Then make the volitional choice to "Give thanks in everything!"

**Thanksgiving** is also an excellent antidote for anxiety or worry as we deduce from Paul's famous command in Philippians...

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (see note Philippians 4:6)

**Thanksgiving** is also an excellent antidote for the ugly vice list in Eph 5:3-4+

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, **BUT RATHER** giving of thanks (literally "but rather thanks")..

**THOUGHT** - Are you tempted by, "wrestling with," and/or being frequently defeated by any of these 6 [vices](#). While you may choose to go to for professional counseling, let me also encourage you to be sure to go to **THE COUNSELOR**, the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26NIV, Jn 15:26NIV, Jn 16:7NIV), beseeching Him to energize you (giving you the **desire** and **power** - Php 2:13NLT+) to work out your salvation in fear and trembling (Php 2:12+), this work being manifest by the righteous fruit of an attitude of gratitude. As your attitude to gratitude to God ascends, these "[bottom feeder](#)" sins will be expelled back into the darkness from which they came. However, do not be deceived but instead stay vigilant and thankful, for sin is never more [surreptitious](#) and [sinister](#) than when it is seemingly "[hibernating](#)". It follows that we need to cultivate thanksgiving as a daily discipline and lifestyle under grace.

**Robert Morgan** illustrates this spiritual dynamic...

When her children were rebelling against the Lord, Ruth Bell Graham found herself occasionally torn apart by worry. One night while abroad, she awoke suddenly in the middle of the night worrying about her son. A current of worry surged through her like an electric shock. She lay in bed and tried to pray, but she suffered

from galloping anxiety, one fear piling upon another. She looked at the clock and it was around three o'clock. She was exhausted, yet she knew she would be unable to go back to sleep. Suddenly the Lord seemed to say to her, "Quit studying the problems and start studying the promises."

She turned on the light, got out her Bible, and the first verses that came to her were these, Philippians 4:6,7. As she read those words, she suddenly realized that the missing ingredient in her prayers had been thanksgiving. "...in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

She put down her Bible and spent time worshipping God for Who and what He is. She later wrote, "I began to thank God for giving me this one I loved so dearly in the first place. I even thanked him for the difficult spots which had taught me so much. And you know what happened? It was as if someone turned on the light in my mind and heart, and the little fears and worries that had been nibbling away in the darkness like mice and cockroaches hurriedly scuttled for cover. That was when I learned that worship and worry cannot live in the same heart. They are mutually exclusive." ([In Everything Give Thanks](#))

**James Moffatt** wrote the following regarding 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18...

To comment adequately on these diamond drops would be an outline a history of the Christian experience in its higher levels.

To the natural man who lives for this present world Paul gives a startling injunction. As usual though Paul does not command them to do something he did not model for them as testified by numerous passages...

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

**1Cor 1:4** I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge,

**Ep 1:16** (note) do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;

**Php 1:3** (note) I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

**Col 1:3** (note) We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

**Philemon 1:4** I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers

**In everything** ([3956](#)) (pas) (first in the Greek for emphasis!) means **no exceptions!** Every situation. All times. Every circumstance. Good. Bad. Happy. Sad. This all inclusive emphatic adverbial phrase lifts this admonition above the level of natural practice or possibility. The previous two commands are continuous as to time (always) and this one is universal in scope.

**Really Paul, this is not humanly possible!** To which Paul would probably reply **'You're right. It's not. It's only superhumanly possible!'** Okay I see it now -

**It's impossible!**

But it is...

**Him-possible!**

And so we're not surprised to see the attitude of gratitude associated with a Spirit filled (controlled, enabled) saint for in the context of Eph 5:18-note, Paul lists one of the "indicators" of Spirit filling writing that he or she is...

always (Same word as in 1Th 5:18 = pas = everything, no exceptions) giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father (Eph 5:20-note)

As alluded to at the beginning of this note, Paul said give thanks *in* everything not *for* everything. Paul is not calling us to be thankful *for* the rebellious kids, or *for* the terminal illness, etc. The preposition is *in* all things. *In* the midst of all things, we can give thanks because God's indwelling Spirit will enable us to do so. Doing so is an expression of our trust in His Sovereignty and Faithfulness, that He will never test us beyond what we are able to endure! (1Cor 10:13-note).

God is sovereign and is over all adversity and all prosperity. The upshot is that everything that is allowed into our lives either from His hand directly or is filtered through His hands of perfect love and infinite wisdom. And so we can give thanks in everything because He is still on the throne and is in control. He El Elyon: Most High God, Sovereign Over All

**William Law** wrote in 1729 in his famous book [A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life](#) wrote that...

If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make it a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. For it is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it to a blessing. Could you, therefore, work miracles, you could not do more for yourself than by this thankful spirit, for it heals with a word speaking, and turns all that it touches into happiness

**Richison** makes a distinction that...

There is a difference in giving thanks “**for**” everything and “**in**” everything. If we gave thanks “for” everything that would mean that we give thanks for the Devil and his plan for the world!

Neither do we give thanks necessarily “after” everything. It does not require much faith to trace the hand of God with the benefit of hindsight. However, it takes faith to accept one’s lot with gratitude in the midst of circumstances...we need to have the attitude of Samuel in 1Samuel 3:18,

Then Samuel told him everything, and hid nothing from him. And he said, ‘It is the LORD. Let Him do what seems good to Him.

Whatever comes in our lives comes in by the will of God, otherwise, He would prevent it. God mixes with His divine compound the bitter and the sweet, the good and the bad, in appropriate proportions so that they work together for good. God knows just the right amount of sunshine and rain. He measures out these things with great precision...(1 [Thessalonians 5:18](#) )

God designs all circumstances for the benefit of the believer. God thinks about your limitations. He knows the proper proportions of adversity that are right for you. We should not concern ourselves with the portion given to someone else. God works in each person’s life differently.

He custom designs the structure of their circumstances by divine design. God knows the straw that will break the camel’s back. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear, but He wants a tested product. Engineers of today’s automobiles test drive prototypes so that they know what these cars can tolerate. God wants to bring out the best in us...

God’s providential plan for our lives includes all contingencies. God foresees every circumstance that comes into our lives. Not only does He foresee everything that happens to us, but He providentially plans or allows each situation that comes into our lives.

There is no substitute for understanding the will of God for our suffering. Nothing can come into our lives unless the Lord allows it. God must put His initials on everything that comes into our state of affairs. We may give thanks through tears.

Our obligation is to believe God’s Word about these matters. The Bible teaches God’s providential care of His creatures throughout the Scriptures. ([1 Thessalonians 5:18b](#))

**Montgomery** writes that Paul commands a "duty not dependent on gratifying times or circumstances. They must practice thanksgiving in every circumstance." (And remember is we are filled with the Spirit "duty" is not a drudgery but a delight!)

There is a silver lining to every cloud. God is with us whatever befalls us, as was so beautifully recorded by **William Cowper** ([John Piper's description of his life](#) or [Audio version](#)) in his hymn...

[\*\*God Moves in a Mysterious Way \(play\)\*\*](#)  
[\*\*God Moves in A Mysterious Way with Lyrics\*\*](#)

God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs, and works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take, the clouds ye so much dread,  
Are big with mercy, and shall break In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace;  
**Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face.**

His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan his work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain.

As **John Piper** asks "How can we not be thankful when we owe everything to God?" (A Godward Life)

**Give thanks** (2168)(**eucharisteo** [word study] from **eucháristos** = thankful, grateful, well-pleasing - Indicates the obligation of being thankful to someone for a favor done <> in turn from **eú** = well + **charizomai** = to grant, give.; English - Eucharist - root of these words is **charis** = grace) means to show that one is under obligation by being thankful. To show oneself as grateful (most often to God in the NT).

**Moulton and Milligan** note that **eucharisteo** originally meant "do a good turn to" or "oblige," and in late Greek passed readily into the meaning "be grateful," "give thanks". Giving thanks is the quality of being grateful, with the implication of also having appropriate (Spirit filled) attitude.

This meaning is common in diplomatic documents in which the recipient of a favor reciprocates with assurance of goodwill. It is also used to express appreciation for benefits or blessings. Giving thanks was an important component of Greco-Roman reciprocity as demonstrated by a copy of a letter written by the Emperor Claudius to a Gymnastic Club expressing his gratification at games performed in his honour. The word eucharista was also common on ancient inscriptions.

**Thanksgiving** expresses what ought never to be absent from any of our devotions. We should always be ready to express our grateful acknowledgement of past mercies as distinguished from the earnest seeking of future mercies.

**TDNT** writes that "We first find **eucharistos** in the senses "pleasant" and "graceful." **Eucharisteo** means "to show a favor," but this imposes a duty of gratitude and the meaning "to be thankful" or "to give thanks" develops. We also find the sense "to pray." The Greek world held thanksgiving in high esteem. With the ordinary use we find a public use (gratitude to rulers) and a religious use (thanksgiving to the gods for blessings). Thanks are also a constituent part of letters." ([Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Eerdmans](#))

Don't miss the fact that **give thanks** is in the **present imperative** which calls for this to be our habitual attitude and action! The **active voice** means that this is a personal choice (enabled by grace and the Spirit) we each must make continually.

**Paul** writes to the saints at Colossae - "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks** (present tense) through Him (Christ Jesus) to God the Father. (see note Colossians 3:17)

The access we have is provided is through Him "by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh (He 10:20-note).

**F F Bruce** comments that "Ingratitude is one of the features of pagan depravity in Ro 1:21 (*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*); the children of God are expected to "abound in thanksgiving" (Col 2:7-note; cf. Col 3:15-note, Col 3:17-note, Col 4:2-note; Eph 5:4-note, Eph 5:20-note). ([1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary](#))

**Hiebert** - The Christian should meet adverse circumstances of life not with a spirit of stoic resignation but with a spirit of unflinching gratitude. Paul and Silas had exemplified this spirit when imprisoned at Philippi (Acts 16:25). Such an attitude is made possible only by the grace of God. It can become a vital reality only when the truth of Ro 8:28-note is experienced. When we realize that God works all things out for good to those who love Him and are yielded to His will, thanksgiving under all circumstances becomes a glorious possibility "He who can say 'Amen' to the will of God in his heart will be able to say 'Hallelujah' also." It is typical of a life of unbelief that it lacks thanksgiving (Ro 1:21-note), but a life united with God in Christ Jesus is characterized by a spirit of thanksgiving ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

**Barnes** notes that believers "can always find something to be thankful for, and there may be reasons why we ought to be thankful for even those dispensations which appear dark and frowning. Chrysostom, once the archbishop of Constantinople, and then driven into exile, persecuted, and despised, died far away from all the splendours of the capital, and all the comforts and honours which he had enjoyed, uttering his favourite motto -- glory to God for all things. Bibliotheca Sacra, i. 700. So we may praise God for everything that happens to us under his government. A man owes a debt of obligation to him for anything which will recall him from his wanderings, and which will prepare him for heaven. Are there any dealings of God towards men which do not contemplate such an end? Is a man ever made to drink the cup of affliction when no drop of mercy is intermingled? Is he ever visited with calamity which

does not in some way contemplate his own temporal or eternal good? Could we see all, we should see that we are never placed in circumstances in which there is not much for which we should thank God. And when, in his dealings, a cloud seems to cover his face, let us remember the good things without number which we have received, and especially remember that we are in the world of redeeming love, and we shall find enough for which to be thankful. For this is the will of God. That is, that you should be grateful. This is what God is pleased to require you to perform in the name of the Lord Jesus. In the gift of that Saviour he has laid the foundation for that claim, and he requires that you should not be unmindful of the obligation. (cf Heb 13:15-note). (Barnes' Notes on the New Testament)

**J Vernon McGee** writes that **give thanks in everything** means "in all circumstances, not just once a year, but all the time. This "is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." If you come to me and ask what is the will of God for you, I can tell you three specific things that are the will of God for you: Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in everything. That is the will of God for you. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#) )

**Gary Delashmutt** writes that...

The New Testament teaches that gratitude is related to spiritual health in two different ways. We'll use a medical model to explore this . . .

(1) Gratitude is a "thermometer" that indicates the state of your spiritual health. A thermometer is a tool that tells you whether you have one of the symptoms of physical illness (fever). It is not a medicine. You don't put the thermometer in the freezer and then stick it into your mouth to break your fever. You put it in your mouth and it tells you if you have a fever. In the same way, the presence or absence of gratitude in your dealings with God is one of the most reliable indicators of your spiritual health. This is because it (along with serving love) is the normal and natural result of personally understanding and receiving God's grace. Grace means charity—a gift to the undeserving.

(2) Gratitude is a "medicine" that promotes your spiritual health. Gratitude is not a feeling that dictates your choices; it is a choice that affects your feelings. This is what Paul is emphasizing in this passage. Most of the New Testament passages on gratitude are imperatives, addressed to our volition rather than to our emotions. He is not prescribing for us how we must feel; he is calling on us to choose to rejoice and thank God on the basis of what is true--regardless of how happy or thankful we may feel.

This is a key insight into biblical spirituality. It involves our feelings and experiences, but it is not rooted in them, because they are fallen and broken and unreliable. It is rooted in God's truth and our choice to express faith in the truth, often in spite of what we feel. This is why the notion that it is unspiritual to thank God unless you feel grateful is false. Choosing by faith to thank God in spite of intense feelings of depression, disappointment, anxiety, etc. is deeply spiritual. This is why if you wait until you feel grateful to thank God, you will feel less and less grateful. But if you choose to thank God regardless of how you feel, you will feel more grateful more often. It is in this sense that gratitude is a key step of faith (along with serving love) that unleashes God's blessing into your experience. ("Grateful servants are happy people.").

**Warren Wiersbe** - An attitude of gratitude is a wonderful weapon against unbelief, disobedience, a hard heart, and a bitter spirit. "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1Thes 5:16-18). Instead of complaining about what we don't have, let's be thankful for what we do have, because God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him. (Bible Exposition Commentary Old Testament)... We can't control the circumstances of life, but we can control how we respond to them. That's what faith is all about, daring to believe that God is working everything for our good even when we don't feel like it or see it happening. "In everything give thanks" (1Thes. 5:18) isn't always easy to obey, but obeying this command is the best antidote against a bitter and critical spirit. The Scottish preacher George H. Morrison said, "Nine-tenths of our unhappiness is selfishness, and is an insult cast in the face of God." (Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament).... (Commenting on Psalm 146:1, 2 Wiersbe writes) God gives us life and breath (Acts 17:25), so it is only right that we use that life and breath to praise Him (Ps 150:6). To receive the gifts and ignore the Giver is the essence of idolatry. The writer promised God he would praise Him all of his life, and certainly this is wise preparation for praising Him for eternity (Ps 104:33). To live a life of praise is to overcome criticism and complaining, to stop competing against others and comparing ourselves with them. It means to be grateful in and for everything (1Th. 5:18; Eph. 5:20) and really believe that God is working all things together for our good (Ro 8:28). A life of praise is free from constant anxiety and discouragement as we focus on the Lord, who is mentioned eleven times in this psalm. (Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament)

**Steven Cole** highlights the importance of our willingness to submit to God and to trust God if we are to truly give thanks in everything - David writes (Ps 86:12), "I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart." Similarly, right after telling us to pray without ceasing, Paul says (1Th. 5:18), "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." We cannot give thanks to God from the heart unless we are **submissive** to His sovereign hand in our circumstances and we **believe** that He is



working even our trials together for our ultimate good.

**BBC** wrote that even the "Pagans who recognized that Fate or some god was sovereign over everything acknowledged that one should accept whatever comes or even give thanks for it. For Paul, those who trust God's sovereignty and love can give thanks in every situation. (Bible Background Commentary)

**Disciple's Study Bible** - God's will is that we gratefully acknowledge His hand in all circumstances, not for all circumstances. Circumstances change; God does not. The Christian has an obligation to remain aware of God's goodness regardless of appearances. Continuous prayer involves an attitude of openness to God in all situations and a practice of talking to God about all situations.

**Merrill Unger** wrote that **thanksgiving** is "A duty of which gratitude is the grace. This obligation of godliness is acknowledged by the universal sentiment of mankind; but as a Christian grace it has some blessed peculiarities. It is gratitude for all the benefits of divine Providence, especially for the general and personal gifts of redemption. The very term most in use shows this; it is *charis*, which is the grace of God in Christ, operating in the soul of the believer as a principle and going back to Him in gratitude: "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2Cor. 9:15). The ethical gratitude of Christianity connects every good gift and every perfect gift with the gift of Christ. Moreover, it is a thanksgiving that in the Christian economy, and in it alone, redounds to God for all things: in everything give thanks. This characteristic flows from the former. The rejoicing that we have in the Lord, and the everlasting consolation we possess in Him, makes every possible variety of divine dispensation a token for good. The Christian privilege is to find reason for gratitude in all things: "for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians. 5:18). ([The New Unger's Bible Dictionary](#))

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**James Smith** - 1Chr 16:7, R.V. Prayer Study No. 8.

This Psalm is a compilation from three others. 1Chr 16:8-22 consists of first 15 verses of Psalm 105:23-33, quotations from Psalm 116:34-36 from Psalm 106.

David drew attention—

1. To Works of God (1Chr 16:8, etc.).
2. To Majesty of God (1Chr 16:23, etc.).
3. To Mercy of God (1Chr 16:34).

This latter is sweetest note of all. The chief work not to **pray**, but to **praise**. In everything give thanks. When He took the cup He gave thanks.

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**Thomas Watson** - **Then you will be thankful**

If you wish to be thankful, get a heart deeply humbled with the sense of your own vileness. A broken heart is the best pipe to sound forth God's praise. He who studies his sins, wonders that he has anything, and that God should shine on such a dunghill: "I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man—but I was shown mercy!" 1 Timothy 1:13. How thankful Paul was! How he trumpeted forth free grace!

A proud man will never be thankful. He looks on all his mercies as either of his own procuring or deserving. If he has an estate, this he got by his wits and industry; not considering that scripture, "Always remember that it is the Lord your God who gives you power to become rich" Dt. 8:18.

Pride stops the current of gratitude. O Christian, think of your unworthiness; see yourself as the least of saints, and the chief of sinners—and then you will be thankful.

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**Robert Morgan** selected 1 Thessalonians 5:18 as one of his top 100 verses to memorize and in his book which I highly recommend to help you store God's Word in your heart he writes...

In medicine the smallest germs can wreak the most havoc, and the tiniest pills can pack the biggest punch. First Thessalonians 5:16-18 is a wafer-thin paragraph that has an outsized effect on our personalities. It can cure our irritability, lighten our depression, lessen our anxiety, and improve our dispositions. It's one of the most psychologically potent passages in the Bible; and, when memorized and practiced, it can alter our attitude at any given time. In staccato-like style, the apostle Paul tells us to be joyful, prayerful, and thankful. And all three verses are all-pervading: Rejoice always! Pray constantly. Give thanks in everything. Rejoice.

Pray. Give thanks. Always. Constantly. Everything. At fourteen words, 1 Thessalonians 5:18 is the longest verse in the trilogy. It's the counterpart to another of our memory verses, Romans 8:28, which says, "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God." Because all things work together for good, we can give thanks in everything. The Bible doesn't tell us to be thankful for everything. Some things are bad in their very nature. There are no examples of biblical heroes thanking God for evil events or demonic attacks. But we can be thankful in all things, for God has promised to turn them for good. Many psychologists believe we are born with preset happiness levels. Just as everyone has a different body, so we have different personalities. Some are sanguine; others have a melancholy streak. Dr. Robert Emmons of the University of California Davis has demonstrated there is one way to adjust those preprogrammed, inborn personality settings. It's by developing the habit of consciously giving thanks in the midst of whatever circumstances we may face. "We discovered scientific proof that when people regularly engage in the systematic cultivation of gratitude, they experience a variety of measurable benefits: psychological, physical, and interpersonal," wrote Dr. Emmons. "The evidence on gratitude contradicts the widely held view that all people have a 'set-point' of happiness that cannot be reset by any known means." This is the advice issued 2,000 years ago in 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Give thanks in everything, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ([100 Bible Verses Everyone Should Know by Heart](#))

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### "In Everything Give Thanks!"

"Mid sunshine, cloud or stormy days,  
When hope abounds or care dismays,  
When trials press and toils increase  
Let not thy faith in God decrease—  
'In every thing give thanks.'

"All things we know shall work for good,  
Nor would we change them if we could;  
'Tis well if only He command;  
His promises will ever stand—  
'In every thing give thanks.'

"He satisfies the longing heart,  
He thwarts the tempter's cruel dart,  
With goodness fills the hungry soul,  
And helps us sing when billows roll.  
'In every thing give thanks.'"  
—Selected

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**A Lost Art (Our Daily Bread)** - Thankfulness seems to be a lost art today. Warren Wiersbe illustrated this problem in his commentary on Colossians. He told about a ministerial student in Evanston, Illinois, who was part of a life-saving squad. In 1860, a ship went aground on the shore of Lake Michigan near Evanston, and Edward Spencer waded again and again into the frigid waters to rescue 17 passengers. In the process, his health was permanently damaged. Some years later at his funeral, it was noted that not one of the people he rescued ever thanked him.

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In his book FOLK PSALMS OF FAITH, Ray Stedman tells of an experience H. A. Ironside had in a crowded restaurant. Just as Ironside was about to begin his meal, a man approached and asked if he could join him. Ironside invited him to have a seat. Then, as was his custom, Ironside bowed his head in prayer. When he opened his eyes, the other man asked, "Do you have a headache?" Ironside replied, "No, I don't." The other man asked, "Well, is there something wrong with your food?" Ironside replied, "No, I was simply thanking God as I always do before I eat."

The man said, "Oh, you're one of those, are you? Well, I want you to know I never give thanks. I earn my money by the sweat of my brow and I don't have to give thanks to anybody when I eat. I just start right in!"

Ironside said, "Yes, you're just like my dog. That's what he does too!" (Ray Stedman, Folk Psalms of Faith)

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In a sermon at Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles, Gary Wilburn said: "In 1636, amid the darkness of the Thirty Years' War, a German pastor, Martin Rinkart, is said to have buried five thousand of his parishioners in one year, and average of fifteen a

day. His parish was ravaged by war, death, and economic disaster. In the heart of that darkness, with the cries of fear outside his window, he sat down and wrote this table grace for his children:

'Now thank we all our God  
With heart and hands and voices  
Who wondrous things had done  
In whom His world rejoices.

Who, from our mother's arms,  
Hath led us on our way  
With countless gifts of love  
And still is ours today

Here was a man who knew thanksgiving comes from love of God, not from outward circumstances. (Don Maddox)

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Scottish minister **Alexander Whyte** was known for his uplifting prayers in the pulpit. He always found something for which to be grateful. One Sunday morning the weather was so gloomy that one church member thought to himself...

Certainly the preacher won't think of anything for which to thank the Lord on a wretched day like this.

Much to his surprise, however, Pastor Whyte began by praying...

We thank Thee, O God, that it is not always like this.

That's the habitual attitude of gratitude Paul is calling for in all of God's children, beloved. Gratitude is an attitude that like all spiritual disciplines, needs to be consciously developed and deliberately cultivated in the dependence on the Holy Spirit and the grace in which we stand. There are some practical steps that can cultivate the gracious attribute of gratitude. For example, you can make thanksgiving a priority in your prayer life (Col 4:2-note) rather than focusing only on petitions and requests. There may even be blessed times when your prayer time consists of nothing but gratefulness to the Almighty. You can always thank Him for the various wonderful aspects of your salvation (adoption & sovereign care, forgiveness, inheritance, the gift of His Spirit, freedom from sin's power and Satan's authority, etc) Have you had any prayer times like that recently? And you can thank Him for the "smaller" blessings of life, those things we all too often take for granted. You can ask Him to make you very sensitive to grumbling and mumbling complaints which are the polar opposite of a thankful spirit. You can utilize spiritual songs (Ep 5:20-note) to cultivate an attitude of thankfulness, allowing the words of a wonderful hymn to lift your eyes and heart in a way that nothing else can. Thank people who bless you in even the smallest ways. It will complete your enjoyment of the blessing, and it will increase your capacity to thank God. Reflect on and serve those less fortunate than you. This will remind you of how gracious God has been to you, how far He has brought you, and how much He has blessed you—which will in turn motivate you to be grateful to God.

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I believe that the real difference in the American church is not between conservatives and liberals, fundamentalists and charismatics, or Republicans and Democrats. The real difference is between the aware and the unaware. When somebody is aware of the love that the Father has for Jesus, that person is spontaneously grateful. Cries of thankfulness become the dominant characteristic of the interior life, and the byproduct of gratitude is joy. We're not joyful and then become grateful—we're grateful, and that makes us joyful. —Brennan Manning

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Sometimes it is not only right, but it is beneficial to express gratitude to another. Beth Rittler decided to contact people in her past that had been meaningful to her. She wrote letters or made telephone calls to many old friends and acquaintances. One letter went to a popular boy in her class who had paid attention to her—a shy, awkward girl with low self-esteem—even though they were not really friends. She located him and sent a letter. He responded with a phone call and now, 25 years after they were schoolmates, they are husband and wife. Thanksgiving is a discipline that carries far beyond one holiday. We can make it a lifestyle. "Thanksgiving" will bring grace to others and benefit to ourselves. —Jim L. Wilson and Rodger Russell

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Concerning the blessings of God, whether they tend unto this life or the life to come, there is great cause why we should delight more in giving thanks than in making requests for them; inasmuch as the one has pensiveness and fear, the other always joy attached; the one belongs to those who seek, the other to those who have found happiness; those who pray do but yet sow, those who give thanks declare they have reaped. RICHARD HOOKER

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We Thank Thee, Lord

For all things beautiful, and good, and true;

For things that seemed not good yet turned out good;  
For all the sweet compulsions of Thy will  
That chased, and tried, and wrought us to Thy shape;  
For things unnumbered that we take of right,  
And value first when first they are withheld;  
For light and air; sweet sense of sound and smell;  
For ears to hear the heavenly harmonies;  
For eyes to see the unseen in the seen;  
For vision of The Worker in the work;  
For hearts that apprehend Thee everyone;  
We thank Thee, Lord!

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Cicero, the great Roman orator and philosopher, said, "A thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue but the parent of all other virtues." Perhaps that explains the large part gratitude plays in Paul's letters. He begins with thanksgiving when he writes to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and the Thessalonians!

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### [Thanks to God for my Redeemer](#)

Translator: Carl E. Backstrom;

Author: August Ludvig Storm (1891)

1. Thanks to God for my Redeemer,  
Thanks for all Thou dost provide!  
Thanks for times now but a mem'ry,  
Thanks for Jesus by my side!  
Thanks for pleasant, balmy springtime,  
Thanks for dark and stormy fall!  
Thanks for tears by now forgotten,  
Thanks for peace within my soul!
  2. Thanks for prayers that Thou hast answered,  
Thanks for what Thou dost deny!  
Thanks for storms that I have weathered,  
Thanks for all Thou dost supply!  
Thanks for pain, and thanks for pleasure,  
Thanks for comfort in despair!  
Thanks for grace that none can measure,  
Thanks for love beyond compare!
  3. Thanks for roses by the wayside,  
Thanks for thorns their stems contain!  
Thanks for home and thanks for fireside,  
Thanks for hope, that sweet refrain!  
Thanks for joy and thanks for sorrow,  
Thanks for heav'nly peace with Thee!  
Thanks for hope in the tomorrow,  
Thanks through all eternity!
- 

[Now Thank We All Our God](#) (1636) - An old English preacher once said, "A grateful mind is a great mind," and the Bible agrees. There are 138 passages of Scripture on the subject of thanksgiving, and some of them are powerfully worded. Colossians 3:17 says: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." 1 Thessalonians 5:18 adds, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." **Unfortunately, few hymns are devoted exclusively to thanking God. Among the small, rich handful we do have is "[Now Thank We All Our God](#)."** The German Christians sing this hymn like American believers sing the "Doxology," yet it's loved on both sides of the Atlantic and around the world. It was written by [Martin Rinkart](#) (1586–1649), a Lutheran pastor in the little village of Eilenberg, Saxony. He grew up as the son of a poor coppersmith, felt called to the ministry, and after his theological training began his pastoral work just as the Thirty Years' War was raging through Germany. Floods of refugees streamed into the walled city of Eilenberg. It was the most desperate of times. The Swedish army encompassed the city gates, and inside the walls there was nothing but plague, famine, and fear. Eight hundred homes were destroyed, and people began dying in increasing numbers. There was a tremendous strain on the pastors,

who expended all their strength in preaching the gospel, caring for the sick and dying, and burying the dead. One after another, the pastors themselves took ill and perished until at last only Martin Rinkart was left. Some days he conducted as many as fifty funerals. Finally the Swedes demanded a huge ransom. It was Martin Rinkart who left the safety of the city walls to negotiate with the enemy, and he did it with such courage and faith that there was soon a conclusion of hostilities, and the period of suffering ended. Rinkart, knowing there is no healing without thanksgiving, composed this hymn for the survivors of Eilenberg. It has been sung around the world ever since.

Now thank we all our God  
with heart and hands and voices,  
who wondrous things has done,  
in whom his world rejoices;  
who from our mothers' arms  
has blessed us on our way  
with countless gifts of love,  
and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God  
through all our life be near us,  
with ever joyful hearts  
and blessed peace to cheer us,  
to keep us in his grace,  
and guide us when perplexed,  
and free us from all ills  
of this world in the next.

All praise and thanks to God  
the Father now be given,  
the Son and Spirit blest,  
who reign in highest heaven  
the one eternal God,  
whom heaven and earth adore;  
for thus it was, is now,  
and shall be evermore.

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It was the worst of times. In the first half of the 17th century, Germany was in the midst of wars and famine and pestilence. In the city of Eilenburg lived a pastor by the name of Martin Rinkart.

During one especially oppressive period, Rinkart conducted up to 50 funerals a day as a plague swept through the town and as the Thirty Years' War wreaked its own terror on the people. Among those whom Rinkart buried were members of his own family.

Yet during those years of darkness and despair, when death and destruction greeted each new day, Pastor Rinkart wrote 66 sacred songs and hymns. Among them was the song "Now Thank We All Our God." As sorrow crouched all around him, Rinkart wrote:

Now thank we all our God  
Now thank we all our God  
With hearts and hands and voice,  
Who wondrous things hath done,  
In whom His world rejoices;  
Who, from our mothers' arms,  
Hath blessed us on our way  
With countless gifts of love,  
And still is ours today.

Rinkart demonstrated a valuable lesson for us all: Thankfulness does not have to wait for prosperity and peace. It's always a good time to praise God for the "wondrous things" He has done.

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**Thank God for Your Thorns** - We don't often thank God for our trials, heartaches, and difficulties. Although we are willing to praise Him for His goodness, we sometimes fail to realize that even adverse circumstances are blessings in disguise. Scottish preacher George Matheson had that problem. He realized that he was not as ready to praise God when things went wrong as he was when they went right. However, after he began to lose his eyesight, he changed his thinking. He struggled for some months with this weary

burden until he reached the point where he could pray, "My God, I have never thanked You for my thorn. I have thanked You a thousand times for my roses, but not once for my thorn. I have been looking forward to a world where I shall get compensated for my cross, but I have never thought of my cross as itself a present glory. Teach me the value of my thorn." When we count our blessings, we should include the weaknesses, the hardships, the burdens, and the trials we face. If we do, we might find that God has used our difficulties more than the "good" things to help us grow spiritually. Why is that? Because it is in those difficult places that we discover the sufficiency of His grace. In our trials, we turn to God. As we depend on Him, we find that His strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). Take a moment and think about the way God has led you. When you praise God for your blessings, do you remember to thank Him for the thorns? P.R. Van Gorder Our Daily Bread,

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Gratitude is the touchstone of all happiness.

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When our perils are past, shall our gratitude sleep?

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If you want to turn your life around, try thankfulness. It will change your life mightily.

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A spirit of ingratitude is the first step toward apostasy.

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The old coronation mantle worn by most of the Hungarian kings bore an inscription in Latin from the "[Te Deum](#)," a popular Christian hymn. It was a hymn of thanksgiving. There's no better way for a king to begin his reign, or a commoner to begin his career, or every man to begin his day.

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**Lord, I thank you for shaking me!** -- Charles Spurgeon, "Flowers from a Puritan's Garden" 1883

"When the tree is soundly shaken, the rotten apples fall to the ground. Just so, in great trials, unsound professors will fall away."

First, trials and afflictions test me, that I may see how far my supposed graces are real and vital. Those which are unsound will soon be lost; only the living and growing graces will remain.

Secondly, trials and afflictions relieve me, for it is a hurtful thing to the tree and to its living fruit to be cumbered with rottenness, in which may breed noxious worms, which when they multiply may come to be devourers of the tree's life!

We are enriched when we lose fabricated virtues. Stripping of filthy rags, is an advance toward cleanliness — and what are counterfeit graces but mere rags, worthy to be torn off and cast into the fire?

In the end, such a result of affliction also beautifies me. For as rotten apples disfigure the tree, so would the mere pretense of virtue mar my character in the sight of God and holy men. It is always better to be openly without a virtue, than to bear the form of it without in reality possessing it.

A sham — is a shame!

An unreal virtue — is an undoubted vice!

Lord, I thank you for shaking me, since I now perceive that all this good and much more is designed by the process; and is, I trust, in some measure accomplished thereby. Oh that your Holy Spirit may bless my adversities to this end!

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**Thanksgiving is never out of season! (James Smith)**

"In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus!" 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Everything we enjoy, should be viewed as coming from the gracious and liberal hand of our sovereign God.

All was forfeited by our sin.

All that we receive is by His grace.

The providence that supplies us — is the wisdom, benevolence, and power of God in operation for us — as expressive of His infinite love and unmerited grace!

Our talents to provide supplies,  
our opportunities to obtain them,

and our abilities to enjoy them,  
— are alike from the Lord.

Every mercy increases our obligation — and deepens our debt to free grace!

Thanksgiving is never out of season, for we have always much to be grateful for.

We must view all things as . . .  
arranged by His wisdom,  
dependent on His will,  
sanctified by His blessing,  
according with His promises,  
and flowing from His love!

"In everything give thanks!" 1 Thessalonians 5:18

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### **The Christliest life (J.R. Miller, "Christian Essentials")**

"Give thanks in everything, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Thanksgiving should never be lacking in a Christian life. It is not enough to observe one day in the year for 'Thanksgiving' although that is a beautiful thing to do. Nor is it enough to put a sentence of thanksgiving into our daily prayers, although that, also, is proper.

It is the grateful spirit which pleases God, the spirit that is always full of praise. There should be a note of thanksgiving running through all our life.

Too many of us go to God only with requests, with our burdens, our worries, our troubles; while we but rarely go to Him with any word of thanks.

We are not to be thankful only for the pleasant and agreeable things that come into our days — we are to be thankful, too, for the things that appear to us to be adversities. "Give thanks in everything." That means . . .

in the sad days, as well as in the glad days,  
when clouds are in the sky, as well as when the sunshine is pouring everywhere.

It is said here that this is the will of God for us. The Christliest life — is the one that is always keyed to the note of praise and thanksgiving.

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### **In everything give thanks! Thomas Watson, "All Things for Good"**

"We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

See what cause the saints have to be frequent in the work of thanksgiving! In this, Christians are defective; though they are much in supplication — yet they are little in thanksgiving. The apostle says, "In everything give thanks!" 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Why so? Because God makes everything work together for our good. We thank the physician, though he gives us a bitter medicine which makes us nauseated — because it is to make us well. We thank any man who does us a good turn; and shall we not be thankful to God — who makes everything work for good to us?

God loves a thankful Christian! Job thanked God when He took all away: "The Lord has taken away — blessed be the name of the Lord!" (Job 1:21). Many will thank God when He gives; Job thanks Him when He takes away, because he knew that God would work good out of it.

We read of saints with harps in their hands — an emblem of praise (Revelation 14:2). Yet we meet many Christians who have tears in their eyes, and complaints in their mouths! But there are few with their harps in their hands — who praise God in affliction.

To be thankful in affliction — is a work peculiar to a saint.

Every bird can sing in spring — but few birds will sing in the dead of winter!

Everyone, almost, can be thankful in prosperity — but a true saint can be thankful in adversity!

Well may we, in the worst that befalls us — have a psalm of thankfulness, because God works all things for our good. Oh, be much in giving thanks to God!

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**Give Thanks!** (READ: Leviticus 23:15-22) - At harvest time it's natural to thank God for the bounty of His blessings. The Feast of Weeks in ancient Israel, established in Leviticus 23, was a week of joyous celebration and feasting in gratitude for the harvest (Dt. 16:9, 10, 11, 12). Even today as farmers gather their crops, many give thanks to the Lord for the abundance of their harvest.

But what if untimely and persistent rain keeps the farmer from getting his machines into the fields and harvesting the ripe grain? What if a sudden hailstorm flattens the corn? Or a summer drought dries up the fields?

The apostle Paul wrote, "In everything give thanks" (1Th 5:18). That may sound unrealistic. But think about it. The Jews were instructed to celebrate the Feast of Weeks whether the crops came in or not. Likewise, we are to give thanks to the Lord "in everything." After all, our praise is to God, not to a barn full of hay or a crib full of corn.

Yes, we can give thanks. We can do so whether the day goes smoothly or we meet aggravating problems. We can be grateful if we're rich or poor, when we're feeling well or if our health fails. In every circumstance, we can affirm God's goodness and discover reasons to give thanks to Him. After all, our gratitude is to Him and for Him. — David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Consider what the Lord has done  
For you and those you love;  
Then give Him thanks with hearts of praise  
For blessings from above. --Sper

We don't need more to be thankful for,  
we need to be more thankful.

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**A Flat Thanks** - The day before Christmas became a thanksgiving day for my family. The station wagon was packed with kids and travel stuff for the 400-mile trip to Grandma's. As is our custom, before leaving we asked God to protect us on the road. He did, but in an unusual way.

As we were cruising down I-75 in Ohio, we ran over some debris in the road. It made a lot of noise, but did no damage—or so we thought. With every passing mile we figured that the crisis had passed. When we pulled off the expressway for gas a few miles later, though, we were in for a deflating surprise. I felt a sickening, sloppy feeling in the front of the car. Both front tires had gone flat.

We weren't happy with having to replace the tires, but we were thankful for God's care. Thankful that we didn't have an accident. Thankful that the tires stayed inflated until we got off the expressway. Thankful for the tow truck sitting at the gas station. Thankful that a repair shop was open. We were thankful for God's answer to our prayer.

Our trials were nothing compared with what the apostle Paul endured. Yet he gave thanks to God, and he said we should be thankful "in everything." Any day can be thanksgiving day, even when things go wrong.— Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We should be ready to give the Lord thanks  
For blessing as well as for test;  
Hearts that are thankful is all that He asks;  
Let's trust Him to give what is best. —Bierema

**If you pause to think,  
you'll have cause to thank.**

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**Everyday Blessings** - Missionary Benjamin Weir was held hostage in Lebanon and imprisoned under miserable conditions for 16 months. In his first interview after his release, he was asked how he spent his time and how he dealt with boredom and despair. His answer stunned the reporters. He simply said, "Counting my blessings."

"Blessings?" they responded.

"Yes," he explained. "Some days I got to take a shower. Sometimes there were some vegetables in my food. And I could always be thankful for the love of my family."



We can understand why the reporters were astonished. It's hard for most of us to be consistently thankful for the commonplace blessings that make life pleasant and comfortable--the unfailing supply of our daily needs, the provision of food and shelter, the companionship of friends and families. There are times when we may even forget the wonderful mercies of God's redeeming grace.

Paul and Silas, though they were beaten, thrown into prison, and placed in stocks, were still "singing hymns to God" (Acts 16:25). May we learn from them, and from Benjamin Weir, to count our blessings no matter what our circumstances. We have many reasons to rejoice. — Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?  
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?  
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,  
And you will be singing as the days go by. --Oatman

**Praise to God comes naturally  
when you count your blessings.**

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**Thanks For Fleas** - Corrie ten Boom was an inspiration and challenge to thousands of people after World War II. Hearts were stirred and lives changed as she told with moving simplicity about God's sufficiency to meet her needs, even as a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp.

Not only was the camp filthy, but there were fleas everywhere. Corrie's sister Betsie, who was imprisoned with her, insisted that 1 Thessalonians 5:18 was God's will for them: "In everything give thanks." But giving thanks in a flea-infested place seemed unrealistic to Corrie—until she realized why the guards didn't come into their barracks to make them stop praying and singing hymns. They wanted to avoid the fleas! So, the prisoners were free to worship and study the Bible. The fleas, yes, even the fleas were agents of grace, and something to be thankful for.

What are some of the "fleas" in our lives? They aren't the big difficulties, but the petty annoyances. They are the little trials from which we can't escape. Is it possible that they are one of the ways the Lord teaches us spiritual lessons and helps us to increase our endurance?

When we are tempted to grumble, let's remember the fleas and give thanks. —Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

For all the heartaches and the tears,  
For gloomy days and fruitless years  
I do give thanks, for now I know  
These were the things that helped me grow! —Crandlemire

If you pause to think,  
you'll find cause to thank.

**FOR THIS IS GOD'S WILL IN CHRIST JESUS: touto gar thelema theou en Christo lesou eis humas:**

- 1 Thessalonians 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [1 Thessalonians 5:18 Giving Thanks in Everything](#) - John MacArthur
- [1 Thessalonians 5:18 In Everything Give Thanks](#) - John MacArthur

**GOD'S GOOD & ACCEPTABLE & PERFECT WILL:  
AN ATTITUDE OF CONSTANT GRATITUDE**

**For (gar)** is a term of explanation which should always prompt a pause to ponder.

**Take a moment and do a survey of some Scriptural passages related to God's will**(interrogate with the 5W'S & H [for many of the passages it will be important to check the **context**] and write down your observations/applications in your devotional notebook) -

Mt 6:10-note, Mt 7:21-note, Mt 12:50, 26:42, Mark 3:35, Jn 4:34, 6:40, 7:17, Acts 13:22, 21:14, 22:14, Ro 12:2-note, Eph 5:17-note, Ep 6:6-note, Col 1:9-note, Col 4:12-note, 1Th 4:3-note, 1Th 5:18-note, Heb

10:7-note, He 10:36-note, He 13:21-note, 1Pe 2:15-note, 1Pe 4:2-note, 1Jn 2:17-note, Ps 40:8-note, Ps 143:10-note

**For (gar)** introduces an explanation, in this case Paul explains why all saints should be motivated to continually be grateful. According to **Hiebert** the preposition **for (gar)** "introduces the fact that this triplet of commands is justified because of God's will for the readers."

**Hiebert** goes on to comment on **this** (touto) that

There is some uncertainty as to the intended scope of **this** (touto). Is it to be restricted to thanksgiving alone, or does it include all three injunctions?... The context favors this inclusive reference. Rejoicing, prayer, and thanksgiving form a trio that are closely related and must not be separated in practice. If the dove of Christian joy is continually to mount upward, it must fly on the wings of prayer and thanksgiving. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

**Guzik** comments that...

After each one of these exhortations - **rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks** - we are told to do them because it is the will of God. The thought isn't "this is God's will, so you must do it." The thought is rather "this is God's will, so you can do it." It isn't easy to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks, but we can do it because it is God's will. ([Ref](#))

**This is God's will** - Paul was not teaching that we should thank God **for** everything that happens to us, but **in** everything. Even in evil circumstances, we can still be thankful for God's presence and for the good that He will accomplish through the distress.

**Will** ([2307](#))(**thelema** from **thelo** = to will with the **"-ma"** suffix indicating the result of the will = "a thing willed") generally speaks of the result of what one has decided. One sees this root word in the feminine name "**Thelma**." In its most basic form, **thelema** refers to a wish, a strong desire, and the willing of some event. (**Note:** See also the discussion of the preceding word **boule** for comments relating to thelema).

**Zodhiates** says that **thelema** is the "Will, not to be conceived as a demand, but as an expression or inclination of pleasure towards that which is liked, that which pleases and creates joy. When it denotes God's will, it signifies His gracious disposition toward something. Used to designate what God Himself does of His own good pleasure. ([The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament. AMG](#))

**Thelema** - 62x in 58v -

Mt 6:10; 7:21; 12:50; 18:14; 21:31; 26:42; Mark 3:35; Luke 12:47; 22:42; 23:25; Jn 1:13; 4:34; 5:30; 6:38, 39, 40; 7:17; 9:31; Acts 13:22; 21:14; 22:14; Ro 1:10-note; Ro 2:18-note; Ro 12:2-note; Ro 15:32-note; 1Cor 1:1; 7:37; 16:12; 2Cor 1:1; 8:5; Gal 1:4; Ep 1:1-note, Ep 1:5-note, Ep 1:9-note, Ep 1:11-note; Ep 2:3-note; Ep 5:17-note; Ep 6:6-note; Col 1:1-note, Col 1:9-note; Col 4:12-note; 1Th 4:3-note; 1Th 5:18-note; 2Ti 1:1-note; 2Ti 2:26-note; He 10:7-note, He 10:9-note, He 10:10-note, He 10:36-note; He 13:21-note; 1Pe 2:15-note; 1Pe 3:17-note; 1Pe 4:2-note, 1Pe 4:19-note; 2Pe 1:21-note; 1Jn 2:17; 5:14; Rev 4:11-note. **NAS** = desire(1), desires(1), will(57).

**Thelema** has both an objective meaning ("what one wishes to happen") and a subjective connotation ("the act of willing or desiring"). The word conveys the idea of desire, even a heart's desire, for the word primarily expresses emotion instead of volition. Thus God's will is not so much God's intention, as it is His heart's desire. It is God's gracious disposition.

Don't complain about thorns among the roses!  
Be grateful for roses among the thorns! (Jas 1:2-note; Phil 4:6-note)

All the way my savior leads me;  
What have I to ask beside?  
Can I doubt His tender mercy,  
Who thro' life has been my guide?  
heav'nly peace divinest comfort,  
Here by faith in Him to dwell!  
For I know whate'er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well;  
For I know whate'er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well;

Cheers each winding path I tread,  
Gives me grace for ev'ry trial,  
Feeds me with the living bread;  
Tho' my weary steps may falter,  
and my soul athirst may be,  
Gushing from the Rock before me,  
Lo! a spring of joy I see;  
Gushing from the Rock before me,  
Lo! a spring of joy I see;

All the way, my Savior leads me;  
Oh, the fullness of His love!  
Perfect rest to me is promised  
In my Father's house above:  
When my spirit, clothed immortal,  
Wings its flight to realms of day,  
This my song thro' endless ages:  
Jesus led me all the way;  
This my song thro' endless ages:  
Jesus led me all the way;

Do not meet adverse circumstances of life with a spirit of stoic resignation but with a spirit of unfailing gratitude. (Heb 12:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 see **notes** He 12:5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11 to help understand this powerful truth of God's discipline & its ultimate purpose...then with that perspective you can offer thanks in everything, even though you may feel or be experiencing sorrow. It is "Him-possible")

In Acts 16 Paul and Silas are in prison in Philippi and Luke records that...

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them (Acts 16:25)

Such an attitude is possible only by the grace of God and the empowering Spirit of God.

As someone has said "He who can say 'Amen' to the will of God in his heart will be able to say 'Hallelujah' also."

**Ray Stedman** writes that "Twice in this letter we have had this phrase, "This is the will of God." We had it first in 1Thes 4:3 (note) where Paul says, "This is the will of God for you, that you know how to preserve your own body in moral purity." That is the will of God for your body! But here is the will of God for your spirit, your inner life -- that you "give thanks in all circumstances." If you want to do the will of God there are the two areas in which his will is clearly set out for you:

Moral purity for your body;  
Continual thanksgiving for your spirit.

**In Christ Jesus** - Christ Jesus Himself is the pattern and source of a life of habitual gratitude. Gratitude to God found its supreme manifestation in Christ's earthly life, and it is only in union with Him (see In Christ and also in Christ Jesus) that such a life is possible for the believer. This life is the product of the new life received from Him and is made operative in believers by the indwelling Holy Spirit. In his description of Spirit filled or controlled believers Paul wrote that they are...

**always giving thanks for all things** in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father (Eph 5:20 note)

**Comment:** MacArthur commenting on Ephesians 5:20 writes that "To be thankful always is to recognize God's control of our lives in every detail as He seeks to conform us to the image of His Son. Nothing must grieve the Holy Spirit so much as the believer who does not give thanks. In King Lear (I.ii.283, 312) Shakespeare wrote, "Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend! ... How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!" When God brings trials and difficulties into our lives and we complain and grumble, we question His wisdom and love as well as His sovereignty... The only person who can genuinely give thanks for all things is the humble person, the person who knows he deserves nothing and who therefore gives thanks even for the smallest things. Lack of thankfulness comes from pride, from the conviction that we deserve something better than we have. [[MacArthur: Ephesians](#)]

**James Denney** comments that...

The third of the standing orders of the Church is, from one point of view, a combination of the first and second; for thanksgiving is a kind of joyful prayer. As a duty, it is recognised by everyone within limits; the difficulty of it is only seen when it is claimed, as here, without limits: **In everything give thanks**. That this is no accidental extravagance is shown by its recurrence in other places. To mention only one: in Php 4:6 (note) the Apostle writes, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

### Is it really possible to do this thing?

There are times, we all know, at which thanksgiving is natural and easy. When our life has taken the course which we ourselves had purposed, and the result seems to justify our foresight; when those whom we love are prosperous and happy; when we have escaped a great danger, or recovered from a severe illness, we feel, or say we feel, so thankful. Even in such circumstances we are possibly not so thankful as we ought to be. Perhaps, if we were, our lives would be a great deal happier. But at all events we frankly admit that we have cause for thanksgiving; God has been good to us, even in our own estimate of goodness; and we ought to cherish and express our grateful love toward Him. Let us not forget to do so. It has been said that an unblest sorrow is the saddest thing in life; but perhaps as sad a thing is an unblest joy. And every joy is unblest for which we do not give God thanks. "Unhallowed pleasures" is a strong expression, which seems proper only to describe gross wickedness; yet it is the very name which describes any pleasure in our life of which we do not recognise God as the Giver, and for which we do not offer Him our humble and hearty thanks.

We would not be so apt to protest against the idea of giving thanks in *everything* if it had ever been our habit to give thanks in *anything*.

Think of what you call, with thorough conviction, your blessings and your mercies, — your bodily health, your soundness of mind, your calling in this world, the faith which you repose in others and which others repose in you; think of the love of your husband or wife. Think of all those sweet and tender ties that bind our lives into one; think of the success with which you have wrought out your own purposes, and laboured at your own ideal; and with all this multitude of mercies before your face, ask whether even for these you have given God thanks. Have they been hallowed and made means of grace to you by your grateful acknowledgment that He is the Giver of them. all? If not, it is plain that you have lost much joy, and have to begin the duty of thanksgiving in the easiest and lowest place.

But the Apostle rises high above this when he says, **In everything give thanks**. He knew, as I have remarked already, that the Thessalonians had been visited by suffering and death: is there a place for thanksgiving there? Yes, he says; for the Christian does not look on sorrow with the eyes of another man. When sickness comes to him or to his home; when there is loss to be borne, or disappointment, or bereavement; when his plans are frustrated, his hopes deferred, and the whole conduct of his life simply taken out of his hands, he is still called to give thanks to God. For he knows that God is love. He knows that God has a purpose of His own in his life, — a purpose which at the moment he may not discern, but which he is bound to believe wiser and larger than any he could purpose for himself. Everyone who has eyes to see must have seen, in the lives of Christian men and women, fruits of sorrow and of suffering which were conspicuously their best possessions, the things for which the whole Church was under obligation to give thanks to God on their behalf.

It is not easy at the moment to see what underlies **sorrow**; it is not possible to grasp by anticipation the beautiful fruits which it yields in the long run to those who accept it without murmuring: but every Christian knows that all things work together for good to them that love God (see note Romans 8:28); and in the strength of that knowledge he is able to keep a thankful heart, however mysterious and trying the providence of God may be.

That **sorrow**, even the deepest and most hopeless, has been blessed, no one can deny. It has taught many a deeper thoughtfulness, a truer estimate of the world and its interests, a more simple trust in God. It has opened the eyes of many to the sufferings of others, and changed boisterous rudeness into tender and delicate sympathy. It has given many weak ones the opportunity of demonstrating the nearness and the strength of Christ, as out of weakness they have been made strong. Often the sufferer in a home is the most thankful member of it. Often the bedside is the surmiest spot in the house, though the bedridden one knows that he or she will never be free again. It is not impossible for a Christian in everything to give thanks.

But it is only a Christian who can do it, as the last words of the Apostle intimate: **This is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward.** These words may refer to all that has preceded: "**Rejoice alway; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks**"; or they may refer to the last clause only. Whichever be the case, the Apostle tells us that the ideal in question has only been revealed in Christ, and hence is only within reach of

those who know Christ. Till Christ came, no man ever dreamt of rejoicing alway, praying without ceasing, and giving thanks in everything. There were noble ideals in the world, high, severe, and pure; but nothing so lofty, buoyant, and exhilarating as this. Men did not know God well enough to know what His will for them was; they thought He demanded integrity, probably, and beyond that, silent and passive submission at the most; no one had conceived that God's will for man was that his life should be made up of joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. But he who has seen Jesus Christ, and has discovered the meaning of His life, knows that this is the true ideal. For Jesus came into our world, and lived among us, that we might know God; He manifested the name of God that we might put our trust in it; and that name is Love; it is Father. If we know the Father, it is possible for us, in the spirit of children, to aim at this lofty Christian ideal; if we do not, it will seem to us utterly unreal. The will of God in Christ Jesus means the will of the Father; it is only for children that His will exists. Do not put aside the apostolic exhortation as paradox or extravagance; to Christian hearts, to the children of God, he speaks words of truth and soberness when he says, **Rejoice alway; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks.** Has not Christ Jesus given us peace with God, and made us friends instead of enemies? Is not that a fountain of joy too deep for sorrow to touch? Has He not assured us that He is with us all the days, even to the end of the world? Is not that a ground upon which we can look up in prayer all the day long? Has He not told us that all things work together for good to them that love God? Of course we cannot trace His operation always; but when we remember the seal with which Christ sealed that great truth; when we remember that in order to fulfil the purpose of God in each of us He laid down His life on our behalf, can we hesitate to trust His word? And if we do not hesitate, but welcome it gladly as our hope in the darkest hour, shall we not try even in everything to give thanks? ([1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 The Standing Orders of the Gospel](#))

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**Matthew Henry** - If we pray without ceasing, we shall not want matter for thanksgiving in every thing. As we must in every thing make our requests known to God by supplications, so we must not omit thanksgiving, Philippians 4:6. We should be thankful in every condition, even in adversity as well as prosperity. It is never so bad with us but it might be worse. If we have ever so much occasion to make our humble complaints to God, we never can have any reason to complain of God, and have always much reason to praise and give thanks: the apostle says, This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us, that we give thanks, seeing God is reconciled to us in Christ Jesus; in him, through him, and for his sake, he allows us to rejoice evermore, and appoints us in every thing to give thanks. It is pleasing to God.

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I was on the football field at our local high school the other day, where my son was running cross country. As I watched these boys and girls, I was preoccupied with recent problems. I also remembered my cross-country days twenty-five years ago and naturally breathed a prayer of thanksgiving. The prayer was something like, "Lord, thank you so much that I'm not running cross country any more."

Then I sort of loosened up a bit and looked around me. The sky was blue; the leaves were yellow; the air was crisp. I began to enjoy the beautiful day. I forgot my problems and quietly thanked God for the beauty of the world around me. My spirits lifted as I began to appreciate the goodness of God, right there in the middle of the football field. —John Yates, "An Attitude of Gratitude," Preaching Today

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This Thanksgiving I'm thankful...

- That there aren't twice as many Congressman and half as many doctors.
  - That grass doesn't grow through snow, necessitating winter mowing as well as shoveling.
  - That there are only twenty-four hours available each day for TV programming.
  - That civil servants aren't less civil.
  - That teenagers ultimately will have children who will become teenagers.
  - That I'm not a turkey.
  - That houses still cost more than cars.
  - That the space available for messages on T-shirts and bumpers is limited.
  - That liberated women whose husbands take them for granted don't all scream at the same time.
  - That snow covers the unraked leaves.
  - That hugs and kisses don't add weight or cause cancer.
  - That record players and radios and TV sets and washers and mixers and lights can be turned off.
  - That no one can turn off the moon and stars. —Christianity Today
- 

When our son, Ryan, was 5, he offered the following prayer during our family devotions: "Dear Jesus, sorry for the mess we made in the yard today." After a slight pause, he concluded, "Thank you for the fun we had doing it." —Ellen Decker, Pennsylvania. Today's Christian Woman

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You say grace before meals. All right. But I say grace before the concert and the opera, and grace before the play and pantomime, and grace before I open a book, and grace before sketching, painting, swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing, and grace before I dip the pen in the ink. —G.K. Chesterton

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If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make it a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. For it is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing. —William Law

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I will thank God for the pleasures given me through my senses, for the glory of the thunder, for the mystery of music, the singing of the birds and the laughter of children. Truly, O Lord, the earth is full of thy riches! —Edward King

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Life is very sweet to me, and there is no position of power or wealth that could tempt me from the throne God has given me. - D L Moody

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O Thou who hast given us so much, mercifully grant us one more thing—a grateful heart. —George Herbert

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My 8-year-old daughter, Christina, didn't have any trouble completing the essay "about something you were thankful for" that her third-grade teacher assigned. Titled "Two People I'm Thankful For," she wrote: "I'm thankful for God and Jesus. I'm thankful for God because he created us. I'm thankful for Jesus because he died for our sins. God and Jesus are always there for us. They're just like any other friend. If you're thankful for pets, you're thankful for God and Jesus because they made them. God and Jesus are pretty neat alright! Are you thankful for anything?" —Joyce Hensley

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It must be an odd feeling to be thankful to nobody in particular. Christians in public institutions often see this odd thing happening on Thanksgiving Day. Everyone in the institution seems to be thankful "in general." It's very strange. It's a little like being married in general. —Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.

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I've seen a picture of the pilgrims at the first American Thanksgiving. Do you know half of their number died the first year they were here? They had a hard time, and it was a cold winter. Dangers lurked everywhere, but those pilgrims didn't think of the death of their loved ones and the dangers and the cold weather. They didn't let that obscure the blessings of God. They went together, and they thanked the Lord for the blessings they had received. Sometimes we need to put down our assets alongside our losses. Everyone of us is more blessed than we are hurt. —Charles Allen,

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It is clear that a sacrifice must consist of praise and thanks, or must at least not be without praise and thanks, if it is to please God. And if it is without praise and thanks, He neither wants nor likes it, as indeed He says (Isaiah 1:11): What is your sacrificing to Me? I do not want your offering of incense. We cannot give God anything; for everything is already His, and all we have comes from Him. We can only give Him praise, thanks, and honor. —Martin Luther

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In 1636 during the Thirty Years War—one of the worst wars in the history of mankind in terms of the sheer number of deaths, epidemics, the economic results—there was a godly pastor whose name was Martin Rinkert. In a single year, this pastor buried 5,000 people in his parish—about fifteen a day. He lived with the worst that life could do. But if you look in your hymnal, you'll find that in the middle of that time, he wrote a table grace for his children, our thanksgiving hymn:

"Now thank we all our God  
With hearts and hands and voices,  
Who wondrous things has done,  
In whom his world rejoices."

If I'd spent the year holding 5,000 funerals of the people I served, could I write for my children a song of thanksgiving? It's an unusual thing that in history many who have the least to thank God about thank him the most.—Joel Gregory

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To thank with all your heart is an art—an art which the Holy Spirit teaches. And you need not worry that the man who can really say "Deo gratias" (to God be thanks) with all his heart will be proud, stubborn, rough, and tough, or will work against God with His gifts. —Martin Luther

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For many years I reported the news at a Christian radio station. One day at lunchtime, I walked home and sat down at the table with my wife. I bowed my head to say grace and heard myself say, "Good morning, this is Carl Metcalf reporting." —Carl Metcalf,

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In your prayer, do not hesitate to thank the Lord for all that he gives. This is often difficult since we are not always willing to receive some of the "gifts" which make little sense to us. Yet all is a gift from God. —Chris Aridas in Soundings. Christianity Today,

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Someone writing in Christianity Today several years ago said, "Shall I thank God at this Thanksgiving? Why was I born at this particular time in the history of the world? Why was I born in a spotless delivery room in an American hospital instead of a steaming shelter in the dank jungle of the Amazon or a mud hut in Africa? Why did I have the privilege of going to school with capable instructors while millions around the world, without a school book, sit or squat on a dirt floor listening to a missionary? "How does it happen that my children are tucked into warm beds at night with clean white sheets while millions of babies in the world will lie in cold rooms, many in their own filth and vomit? Why can I sit down to a warm meal whenever I want to and eat too much when millions will know all of their lives the gnawing pangs of hunger? Do I deserve to share in such wealth? Why me and not other millions? Why was I born in a land I didn't build, in a prosperity that I didn't create and enjoy a freedom that I didn't establish? Why an American sitting comfortably in my own living room this Thanksgiving rather than an Indian squatting in the dark corner of some infested alley in Calcutta, shivering in the cold, or a Cambodian in the rubble of what used to be my home, or a terrified, running Nicaraguan in the jungle? Do I deserve it? By what right do I have it?" —Joel Gregory

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**Andrew Murray** - A joyful, thankful life is what God has destined for us, is what He will work in us: what He desires, that He certainly does in those who do not withstand Him, but receive and suffer His will to work in them. (The New Life)

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**William Barclay** - There is always something for which to give thanks; even on the darkest day there are blessings to count. We must remember that if we face the sun the shadows will fall behind us but if we turn our backs on the sun all the shadows will be in front.

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A French proverb says "Gratitude is the heart's memory."

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The Pilgrims would not fully understand in their lifetime the reason for the suffering that beset them. The first official Thanksgiving Day occurred as a unique holy day in 1621—in the fall of that year with lingering memories of the difficult, terrible winter they had just been through a few months before, in which scores and scores of babies and children and young people and adults had starved to death, and many of the Pilgrims had gotten to a point where they were even ready to go back to England. They had climbed into a ship and were in that harbor heading back to England, ready to give up. It was only as they saw another ship coming the other way, and on that ship there was a Frenchman named Delaware, and he came with some medical supplies and some food, that they had enough hope to go back and to try to live in the midst of those adverse sufferings. And yet they came to that first Thanksgiving with the spirit of giving and of sharing. —Ron Lee Davis, "Rejoicing in Our Suffering,"

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Be Thankful for Your Problems - When I was a young mother with two preschoolers, I was often overwhelmed. One night I fell into bed, exhausted. I poured out my frustrations to God. "The kids won't mind, the house is a mess, my husband doesn't seem to care ..."—the list went on. Suddenly, a voice said to my heart, "Which one do you want me to take away?" Everything I was complaining about was precious to me. Immediately, I began to thank God for everything on my list—something I continue to do now as a grandmother.

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Prayer makes common things holy and secular things sacred. It receives things from God with thanksgiving and hallows them with thankful hearts and devoted service. —E.M. Bounds

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Gratitude is the praise we offer - God: for teachers kind, benefactors never to be forgotten, for all who have advantaged me, by writings, sermons, converse, prayers, examples, for all these and all others which I know, which I know not, open, hidden, remembered, and forgotten.

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In every tragedy you can look at what you've lost and be hateful, or you can look at what you have left and be grateful. Joseph (Old Testament) is a grand example of choosing to be grateful instead of hateful in the face of betrayal. (Genesis 50:18-21; Job 1:20-22; 1 Thessalonians 5:18)

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When my brother and sister-in-law were expecting a baby, I asked my four-year-old niece, Justina, "What do you want, a baby brother or a baby sister?" "Aunt Donna," she chided, "sometimes you just gots to take what God gives ya." —Donna Patton

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Back when Rudyard Kipling was England's most popular writer, the news got out that his publishers paid him a dollar a word for his work. Some Cambridge students, hearing this, cabled Kipling one dollar, along with instructions, "Please send us one of your very best words." Kipling replied with a one-word telegram, "Thanks."

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A husband gave his wife a beautiful skunk coat beside a Christmas tree. When his wife opened it up she said, "I can't see how such a nice coat can come from such a foul smelling little beast." The husband said, "I don't ask for thanks, but I do demand respect."

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One evening we picked up four people from the street. One of them was in the most terrible condition. I told the others with me, "You take care of the other three; I will take care of the one who looks worst." I did all that my love could do. I put her in bed, and she had a beautiful smile on her face. She took hold of my hand as she said two words: "Thank you." Then she died. I asked myself, what would I say if I were in her place? I would have tried to draw a little attention to myself. I would have said, "I am hungry, I am dying, I am in pain." But she gave me much more; she gave me her grateful love. And she died with a smile on her face. Gratitude brings a smile and becomes a gift.

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Gratitude is an offering precious in the sight of God, and it is one that the poorest of us can make and be not poorer but richer for having made it. —A. W. Tozer

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Many years ago, I went to hear Doctor Martin Luther King, Sr. King said his mother had told him to always thank God for what was left. And that was something to think about: if you've got enough breath left to complain, you have something left. I thought that was very impressive, and I really made a mental note of it. Some years later I went back to Atlanta to Ebenezer Church, and by this time Dr. King had lost A. D. and M. L. his two sons, and his beloved wife had been shot to death right before his eyes at the organ in that very sanctuary. Guess what the old man was saying? 'Thank God for what's left.' There's always enough left in life to make it worth living. —Henry Mitchell

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One Thanksgiving Day I was home alone in the evening. On my favorite radio program, Bill Pearce, the host of "Night Sounds," asked us to think of all the things for which we were thankful—our country, our families, home, work, and all the rest. Then he challenged us: "Have you ever stopped to be thankful just for yourself?" As he candidly shared his own struggles with this, I realized I had never really thanked God for all the work he had done in my creation. I was overcome as I thought of how God had made plans for my life long before I was born. —Ingrid Trobisch

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Two-year-old Kimberly was at an age when many things were being learned at once—ABC's, new words, numbers, etc. One day when she was putting her dolls to bed she knelt down beside the doll's cradle and breathed one of her first prayers: "Heavenly Father, we thank you for... five, six, seven, eight..." —Maureen Tobey

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Often we put a "but" at the end of a "thank you," as in, "Thank you, Lord, for friends, but I wish I had more"; or, "I'm grateful for my health, but I wish I weren't getting gray and creaky;" or, "I'm grateful for our home, but I wish we could afford new carpeting." —Carole Mayhall

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The modern American seldom pauses to give thanks for the simple blessings of life. One reason is that we are used to having so much. We simply assume that we will have all the good things of life. Another reason is that it hurts our pride to be grateful. We do not want to admit that God is the Provider of all good things. We are simply His stewards. Being thankful requires humility and faith in God. When we have these, we can be grateful. —Richard B. Douglass

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This verse gives us the true secret of a healthy heart. It doesn't tell us to give thanks for all circumstances, but in all circumstances, because God is with us through all the circumstances of life. His mercies are new every morning, His compassions never fail, and He causes all things to work for the good of those who love Him. I recently read of a young would-be journalist who moved to Manhattan, where his career sputtered and stalled. He grew so depressed that one cold and damp Saturday he wanted to stay in bed all day. But he had to pick up a photograph across town, so he set out walking. Somehow it came to his mind specifically to look for things that seemed pleasing to him—a baby in a buggy, the sizzling smells wafting from a bistro, a jet piercing the clouds. He never forgot his "thanksgiving walk," and it transformed his outlook. Psychologists have studied the psychological effects of



gratitude, and a new science of thanksgiving is emerging. People who approach life by seeing and counting their blessings each day are less depressed, less envious, and less anxious. They feel better about their lives, they're more optimistic and energetic, they exercise more, have stronger immune systems, encounter fewer illnesses, get more sleep, enjoy greater life expectancy, and have happier homes. Give thanks in all circumstances today, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (Morgan - My All in All)

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A woman leaving the worship service said to the minister, "I enjoyed the sermon." "Don't thank me. Thank the Lord," said the minister. "It wasn't that good," the lady replied. —Robert S. Smith,

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Whatever we have, we have because God in his grace and generosity has given it to us. When we realize this, there comes into our lives a joyful gratitude for what we do have, and we are freed from resentment and anxiety over what we don't have. —Ben Patterson

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In her book, *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom tells about an incident that taught her the principle of giving thanks in all things. It was during World War II. Corrie and her sister, Betsy, had been harboring Jewish people in their home, so they were arrested and imprisoned at Ravensbruck Camp. The barracks was extremely crowded and infested with fleas. One morning they read in their tattered Bible from 1 Thessalonians the reminder to rejoice in all things. Betsy said, "Corrie, we've got to give thanks for this barracks and even for these fleas." Corrie replied, "No way am I going to thank God for fleas." But Betsy was persuasive, and they did thank God even for the fleas. During the months that followed, they found that their barracks was left relatively free, and they could do Bible study, talk openly, and even pray in the barracks. It was their only place of refuge. Several months later they learned that the reason the guards never entered their barracks was because of those blasted fleas. —John Yates

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It is a terrible thing to be grateful and have no one to thank, to be awed and have no one to worship. —Phillip Yancey

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John Henry Jowett, a British preacher of an earlier generation, said this about gratitude: "Gratitude is a vaccine, an antitoxin, and an antiseptic." What did he mean? He meant that gratitude, like a vaccine, can prevent the invasion of a disgruntled, discouraged spirit. Like an antitoxin, gratitude can prevent the affects of the poisons of cynicism, criticalness, and grumbling. Like an antiseptic, a spirit of gratitude can soothe and heal the most troubled spirit. —John Yates

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We may acknowledge our Divine Provider over the roast and mashed potatoes, but how often are we deliberately thankful for the water from our taps? The wood for our houses and our furniture? The paper for our books and napkins and note pads? The brick and metal and fabric and countless other materials we use and enjoy? God through nature made them all possible. We would do well to remember. —Philip Wiebe

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If one should give me a dish of sand and tell me there were particles of iron in it, I might look for them with my eyes and search for them with my clumsy fingers and be unable to detect them; but let me take a magnet and sweep through it and now would it draw to itself the almost invisible particles by the mere power of attraction. The unthankful heart, like my finger in the sand, discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day and as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find, in every hour, some heavenly blessings, only the iron in God's sand is gold! —Henry Ward Beecher

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It's an interesting fact related to me by Bible translators that the Masai tribe in West Africa have an unusual way of saying, "I thank you." They say literally, "My head is in the dirt." When the Masai express thanks, they literally put their forehead down on the ground. They want to acknowledge gratitude with humility. It's interesting that members of another African tribe express gratitude by saying, "I sit on the ground before you." When one of them wants to express gratitude to another, he sits in front of the hut of the person to whom he wishes to express gratitude and just sits there in humility for an extended length of time. —Joel Gregory

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It is probable that in most of us the spiritual life is impoverished and stunted because we give so little place to gratitude. It is more important to thank God for blessings received than to pray for them beforehand. For that forward-looking prayer, though right as an expression of dependence upon God, is still self-centered in part, at least, of its interest; there is something we hope to gain by our prayer. But the backward-looking act of thanksgiving is quite free from this. In itself it is quite selfless. Thus it is akin to love. All our love to God is in response to his love for us; it never starts on our side. "We love, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). —William Temple

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Some people are appreciative by nature, but some are not; and it is these latter people who especially need God's power to express thanksgiving. We should remember that every good gift comes from God and that He is (as the theologians put it) "the Source,

Support, and End of all things." The very breath in our mouths is the free gift of God. Thankfulness is the opposite of selfishness. The selfish person says, "I deserve what comes to me! Other people ought to make me happy." But the mature Christian realizes that life is a gift from God, and that the blessings of life come only from His bountiful hand. —Warren W. Wiersbe in *A Time To Be Renewed*. Christianity

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Be thankful for the providence which has made you poor, or sick, or sad; for by all this Jesus works the life of your spirit and turns you to Himself. - CHARLES SPURGEON

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A little boy was asked by his father to say grace at the table. While the rest of the family waited, the little guy eyed every dish of food his mother had prepared. After the examination, he bowed his head and honestly prayed, "Lord, I don't like the looks of it, but I thank you for it, and I'll eat it anyway. Amen."

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Abraham Lincoln's Thankful Attitude - A man whom many believe was the greatest American president is a good example. When he was 7 years of age, his family was forced out of their home, and he went to work. When he was 9, his mother died. He lost his job as a store clerk when he was 20. He wanted to go to law school, but he didn't have the education. At age 23 he went into debt to be a partner in a small store. Three years later the business partner died, and the resulting debt took years to repay. When he was 28, after courting a girl for four years, he asked her to marry him, and she turned him down. On his third try he was elected to Congress, at age 37, but then failed to be re-elected. His son died at 4 years of age. When this man was 45, he ran for the Senate and lost. At age 47 he ran for the vice-presidency and lost. But at age 51 he was elected president of the United States. The man was Abraham Lincoln, a man who learned to face discouragement and move beyond it. Did you know that it was Abraham Lincoln who, in the midst of the Civil War, in 1863, established the annual celebration of Thanksgiving? Lincoln had learned how important it is to stop and thank God in the midst of great difficulties. —John Yates, "An Attitude of Gratitude,"

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There is an imaginative story told of a day when the sun did not rise. Six o'clock came and there was no sign of dawn. At seven o'clock, there was still no ray of light. At noon, it was as black as midnight. No birds sang and only the hoot of an owl broke the silence. Then came the long black hours of the afternoon. Finally evening arrived but no one slept that night. Some wept, some wrung their hands in anguish. Every church was thronged with people on their knees. Thus they remained the whole night through. After that long night of terror and agony, millions of eager, tear-streaked faces were turned toward the east. When the sky began to grow red and the sun rose, there was a loud shout of joy. Millions of lips said, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," because the sun had risen after one day of darkness.

The very consistency of God's blessings sometimes seems to dull our gratitude. The wonderful thing about the mercies of God is that they are fresh every morning and new every evening. Let us remember to be constantly thankful to our gracious God.

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We can always find something to be thankful for, and there may be reasons why we ought to be thankful for even those dispensations which appear dark and frowning. - ALBERT BARNES

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Not Exactly an Attitude of Gratitude - We were very proud of our nearly 2-year-old son who was learning to say "please" and "thank you." After he opened various gifts from friends at Christmas, we asked him, "Zachary, what do you say to Diana and Alejandra?" Zachary responded, "More, please." —Sue P., "Life in Our House," *Christian Parenting Today*

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German pastor Martin Rinkart served in the walled town of Eilenburg during the horrors of the Thirty Years War of 1618-1648. Eilenburg became an overcrowded refuge for the surrounding area. The fugitives suffered from epidemic and famine. At the beginning of 1637, the year of the Great Pestilence, there were four ministers in Eilenburg. But one abandoned his post for healthier areas and could not be persuaded to return. Pastor Rinkhart officiated at the funerals of the other two. As the only pastor left, he often conducted services for as many as 40 to 50 persons a day—some 4,480 in all. In May of that year, his own wife died. By the end of the year, the refugees had to be buried in trenches without services. Yet living in a world dominated by death, Pastor Rinkart wrote the following prayer for his children to offer to the Lord:

Now thank we all our God  
With hearts and hands and voices;  
Who wondrous things hath done,  
In whom this world rejoices.  
Who, from our mother's arms,  
Hath led us on our way,  
With countless gifts of love,  
And still is ours today.

—Harry Genet, quoted in *Men of Integrity*, Vol

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One day in the early thirties, William Stidger and a fellow pastor sat in a restaurant talking about the worldwide depression—the suffering people, rich committing suicide, the jobless. The pastor said, "In two or three weeks I have to preach on Thanksgiving Day. What can I say?" Stidger said it was like the Spirit of God answered that question: "Why not thank those people who've been a blessing in your life and affirm them during this terrible time?" He thought of an English teacher who had instilled in him a love of literature and verse, affecting all his writing and preaching. So he wrote to her. In a matter of days he got a reply in the feeble scrawl of the aged. "My Dear Willy: I can't tell you how much your note meant to me. I am in my eighties, living alone in a small room, cooking my own meals, lonely, and like the last leaf of autumn lingering behind. You'll be interested to know that I taught in school for more than 50 years, and yours is the first note of appreciation I ever received. It came on a blue, cold morning, and it cheered me as nothing has done in many years." —David A. Seamands, *Preaching Today*,

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A thankful heart cannot be cynical. —A.W. Tozer

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**Chrysostom's** example of "Praise For All Things"...

Three hundred years after Paul lived John Chrysostom, a good and brave man who preached very plainly against iniquity of all kinds. The empress was not a good woman, so she schemed to have him falsely accused and banished. He died an exile from his home.

Thirty years later, his body was bought back to Constantinople for burial in the imperial tomb. Chrysostom's motto was inscribed on the tomb: "Praise God for everything!"

As his friends testified, "When he was driven from home, when he was a stranger in the strange land, his letters would often end with that doxology, 'Praise God for all things!' "

Where did Chrysostom get his motto? From Paul—"In everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians. 5:18). (Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations)

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**In Everything Give Thanks** = Taking [a] "servant" attitude of thankfulness in all of life's circumstances will help you react as old **Matthew Henry** did when he was mugged. He wrote in his diary, "Let me be thankful first because I was never robbed before; second, although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed." I wonder if I could be that thankful. Could you (or I)? One of the greatest marks of spiritual maturity is the ability to give thanks when it's tough.

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G. K. Chesterton, when asked what was the greatest lesson he had ever learned in life, said, "The greatest lesson I have learned is to take things with gratitude and not take them for granted." He also wrote, "You say grace before meals. All right But I say grace before the concert and the opera, and grace before the play and pantomime, and grace before I open a book, and grace before sketching, painting, swimming, walking, playing, and grace before I dip the pen in the ink." Throughout the Scripture, we hear the call to give thanks. Thanksgiving is faith in action

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A woman had a parrot who always complained about everything. It was Thanksgiving Eve, and she was preparing the Thanksgiving meal. The parrot complained about everything as she worked. Finally, she had heard enough. She took him out of his cage and opened the refrigerator to put him in to punish him, "You'll stay in the refrigerator until you cool off and get control on your tongue," she said as she put him and closed the door. The parrot was stunned. Shivering, he caught a glimpse of the Thanksgiving turkey, skinned, legs pointing upward from the pan. The parrot said to the turkey, "Good heavens, man! What did you say?"

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Focus on your "haves," not your "have-nots." The hymn says, "Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done." As the psalmist said, "Forget not all his benefits" (Psalm 103:2). "Be on the lookout for mercies. The more we look for them, the more of them we will see. Blessings brighten when we count them. Out of the determination of the heart, the eyes see. If you want to be gloomy, there's gloom enough to keep you glum; if you want to be happy, there's gleam enough to keep you glad. Better to lose count while naming your blessings than to lose your blessings by counting your troubles" (M B Babcock)

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When we problems go away when you give thanks. I mean that your problems stop being such a problem. You live from the inside out. What goes on around you no longer controls the condition of the world within you.

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Notice that in 1Thes 5:16 (Rejoice always) and 1Th 5:18 we see the combination of joy and giving thanks which Paul also links in Colossians 1:11-12 in the phrase "Joyously giving thanks to the Father." Paul's association of thanksgiving (**eucharisteo**) and joy

(**chara**) is not surprising as both words are related to the the same Greek root (**charis**) which is our word "**grace**." Indeed grace is the foundation for saints enabled by the Spirit to "joyously give thanks" when the circumstances are not very joy filled! And remember the lost world is watching. Will I respond naturally or supernaturally. The former draws attention to me, but the latter brings glory to the Father (Mt 5:16)! The secret to abounding joy is a Spirit wrought, grace based gratitude attitude. Remember, when you can't change the wind, allow the Spirit to enable you to adjust your sails!

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### [Count your Blessings](#)

When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,  
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,  
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?  
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?  
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,  
And you will keep singing as the days go by.

When you look at others with their lands and gold,  
Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold;  
Count your many blessings—\*money cannot buy [\*wealth can never buy]  
Your reward in heaven, nor your home on high.

So, amid the conflict whether great or small,  
Do not be discouraged, God is over all;  
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,  
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

Refrain:

Count your blessings, name them one by one,  
Count your blessings, see what God has done!  
Count your blessings, name them one by one,  
\*Count your many blessings, see what God has done.  
[\*And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.]

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**Henrietta Mears** (in *What the Bible is All About*) sums up this section beautifully exhorting us first to be patiently waiting for Christ's return and then...

While you wait, Paul gives you a grand octave upon which to play great melodies of hope. Strike every note on this wonderful octave. If you do, your life will be rich.

- Be joyful always—1 Thes 5:16
  - Pray continually—1 Thes 5:17
  - Give thanks in all circumstances—1 Thes 5:18
  - Do not put out the Spirit's fire—1 Thes 5:19
  - Do not treat prophecies with contempt—1 Thes 5:20
  - Test everything—1 Thes 5:21
  - Hold on to the good—1 Thes 5:21
  - Avoid every kind of evil—1 Thes 5:22.
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**Our Daily Bread** has the following devotionals (All are [Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))...

**Knowing God's Will** - I tell my friends in jest that I make three difficult decisions every day: What should I eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner? I live in Singapore, where we enjoy the food of the Chinese, Malay, and Indian cultures, to name just a few. We are spoiled by having so many choices.

Life is full of decisions—far more serious ones than choosing what to eat. Perhaps this explains why some people constantly wonder what God's will is for their lives.

Discovering God's will is not necessarily a complicated process. He has given us many simple and clearly stated principles for life. For example, we are told, "This is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Peter 2:15). In 1 Thessalonians 4:3 we read, "This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality." And in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 we are told, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

As we live by faith and do what the Bible clearly tells us to do, we can be sure the Lord will lead us through the difficult decisions when the options may not be clear. Above all else, God's will is that we submit to Him and be willing to follow wherever He leads. — Albert Lee

If you will choose to do God's will  
And follow what is right,  
God will confirm to you His truth  
And give you greater light. —D. De Haan

**The best way to know God's will  
is to say "I will" to God.**

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**Be Filled With Thankfulness** - Throughout history, many cultures have set aside a time for expressing their thankfulness. In the US, Thanksgiving Day originated with the pilgrims. In the midst of extreme hardship, loss of loved ones, and meager supplies, they still believed they were blessed. They chose to celebrate God's blessings by sharing a meal with Native Americans who had helped them survive.

We know we've lost the spirit of that original celebration when we catch ourselves complaining that our Thanksgiving Day has been "spoiled" by bad weather, disappointing food, or a bad cold. It's we who are spoiled—spoiled by the very blessings that should make every day a day of thanksgiving, whatever our circumstances.

Billy Graham wrote, "Ingratitude is a sin, just as surely as is lying or stealing or immorality or any other sin condemned by the Bible." He then quoted Romans 1:21, one of the Bible's indictments against rebellious humanity. Then Dr. Graham added, "Nothing turns us into bitter, selfish, dissatisfied people more quickly than an ungrateful heart. And nothing will do more to restore contentment and the joy of our salvation than a true spirit of thankfulness."

Which condition describes you?—Joanie Yoder

A grumbling mood of discontent  
Gives way to thankfulness  
When we consider all God's gifts  
And all that we possess. —Sper

**Gratitude is a God-honoring attitude**

**IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS**  
**Rob Morgan**

Rejoice always,

Pray without ceasing,

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

For you or me, it would have been as if our car had been stolen. For Mrs. Tendai, living in Africa's impoverished wastelands, it was her donkey. It went missing right at harvest time, and Mrs. Tendai searched for it high and low. She even reported the loss to the local police, but they were unable to help. She made it a matter of prayer and left it in the Lord's hands, which was all she knew to do.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Tendai faced another problem. Due to a lack of good seed, fertilizer, and rainfall, her crops had been meager and her harvest small. She had very little money for food, and she soon found herself praying more about her daily bread than about her missing donkey. She was worried about feeding her children; so she made it a matter of prayer and left it in the Lord's hands, which

was all she knew to do.

One morning soon thereafter, Mrs. Tendai walked out of her hut and there was her donkey, standing there with 100 pounds of grain on his back. She wasn't sure what to do about it, because while she was glad to have her donkey back, she didn't want to take someone else's grain. But eventually the story was pieced together.

A thief had stolen the donkey and was using it on his farm. One night after grinding his corn, he went to the beer hall to drink, leaving his donkey, burdened by the sack of grain, outside. The donkey realized he was close to home, and so he decided to return to where he would be cared for. The thief, wishing to remain anonymous, didn't want to come claiming his grain; and so Mrs. Tendai was able to feed her family. Two disappointments became a pair of blessings as God answered both prayers in an unusual way.[1]

And that's why the Bible says: In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

This verse brings out two elements of a thankful spirit

### **Thanksgiving is Restorative to the Soul**

**First, thanksgiving is restorative to the soul.** The writer of Psalm 23 once claimed about the Lord, "He restores my soul." The implication is that our souls get out of whack. From time to time, our emotions get out of kilter. In the last part of 1 Thessalonians, the apostle Paul is telling us how to keep our emotions and our spirits in a healthy state. Look at the extended paragraph:

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always persevere what is good both for yourselves and for all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely.... (vv. 14-23).

This is a recipe for mental and spiritual health, and right in the middle of it is this admonition to give thanks for all things, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

I want to suggest that a thankful attitude is the opposite of and the cure for three different emotional ailments.

### **First, depression. After all, what is depression or discouragement except for the total collapse of thanksgiving in your life?**

Several years ago, I had a speaking engagement near Winona Lake, Indiana; and I took some time off to visit the home of Billy Sunday who loved there. He was a famous baseball player who became a world-renowned evangelist, the "Billy Graham" of his day. Billy was happily married to a woman named Helen, who was known affectionately as "Ma" Sunday. On November 19, 1935, Billy suffered a heart attack and he died suddenly in his wife's arms. The two were deeply in love, and they were life-partners together in the Lord's work; and "Ma" Sunday was devastated. In one moment, she felt she had lost both her husband and her life's work; and she felt herself spiraling down into depression.

Sometime later, a group of Christians in Buffalo, New York, approached her, asking her to speak at a special service they were planning in Buffalo to honor her husband. At first, she didn't think she could speak at all; but then she developed an idea for her talk. She entitled it: "Things I'm Thankful For." She developed a long list of thanksgiving items, and she got up to speak. This is the way she began:

Folks, it's surprising how many things God can reveal to you to be thankful for, if you really want to know and ask Him to help you. I had no idea there were so many! But when I prayed and asked God to help me write them down, they came into my mind one after the other—and the very first one was: if Billy had to go, oh, how thankful I was to God Almighty that He called him away in an instant.... He just cried out to me, "I'm getting dizzy, Ma!" and he was gone! How wonderful to be here one second, and up in heaven the next second! Never knowing any real pain or any real suffering of that type—I think God was so good to take Billy that way, and I thank him for it."

And she went on to list a large number of items that had come to her mind as objects of praise and thanksgiving; and it lifted her depression and released her for a life of continued usefulness and service. Thanksgiving is the corrective for depression.

It's also the opposite of disgruntlement and discontent. It's very easy for us to become disgruntled and discontent with various factors in our lives; but the other day I read something I'd like to pass on to you. A man wrote:

### **I am thankful:**

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

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

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

For the teenager who is not doing dishes but is watching TV, because that means he is at home and not on the streets.

For the taxes that I pay, because it means that I'm employed.

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

For weariness at the end of the day, because it means I have been capable of working hard.

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[2]

**Thanksgiving is also the opposite of anxiety.** We learn this by noticing two important little words in Philippians 4:6: Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

When her children were rebelling against the Lord, Ruth Bell Graham found herself occasionally torn apart by worry. One night while abroad, she awoke suddenly in the middle of the night worrying about her son. A current of worry surged through her like an electric shock. She lay in bed and tried to pray, but she suffered from galloping anxiety, one fear piling upon another. She looked at the clock and it was around three o'clock. She was exhausted, yet she knew she would be unable to go back to sleep. Suddenly the Lord seemed to say to her, "Quit studying the problems and start studying the promises."

She turned on the light, got out her Bible, and the first verses that came to her were these, Philippians 4:6-7. As she read those words, she suddenly realized that the missing ingredient in her prayers had been thanksgiving. "...in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

She put down her Bible and spent time worshipping God for who and what He is. She later wrote, "I began to thank God for giving me this one I loved so dearly in the first place. I even thanked him for the difficult spots which had taught me so much. And you know what happened? It was as if someone turned on the light in my mind and heart, and the little fears and worries that had been nibbling away in the darkness like mice and cockroaches hurriedly scuttled for cover. That was when I learned that worship and worry cannot live in the same heart. They are mutually exclusive."

**So thanksgiving is opposite of and the corrective to depression, discontent, anxiety—and, for that matter, a host of other mental and emotional maladies.** But here's the question. Is this just an irrational Pollyanna, head-in-the-sand response to life? Does it make sense to be thankful when a child is away from the Lord, or when we have health problems, financial problems, or other kinds of problems?

### **Thanksgiving is Rational to the Mind**

Yes, it does. Thanksgiving is not only restorative to the soul but it is rational to the mind. It is logical and thoughtful and sane and sensible. It's not a matter of wishful thinking, but of clear and straightforward thinking. Notice two things about 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

**First**, this verse does not say: **For** everything give thanks. The Lord isn't telling us to be thankful for the cancer or for the rebellion or for the tragedy. The preposition is **in** all things. In the midst of all things, we still have a basis for thanksgiving.

**Second**, that basis is found in the overcoming, overarching, overruling will of God. Look at this verse again: In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. There are two ways of interpreting that. It might mean: It is God's will for you to give thanks in all things. Or it might mean: You can give thanks for all things because those things represent the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

Technically as a matter of biblical exegesis, only one of those interpretations is correct; but in practical terms both of those statements are true in terms of their applications and implications. It is God's will for us to give thanks in every circumstance in life, because God is turning every circumstance in life to our good and using them to fulfill His will for us.

This verse could be considered the flip side of Romans 8:28. Just as a coin has two sides, so the truths of God's Word have two sides. There is the command side and there is the promise side.

The promise side is Romans 8:28:

For we know that God works all things for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

The command side is 1 Thessalonians 5:18:

In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

In its comment on 1 Thessalonians 5:18, The Bible Knowledge Commentary puts it this way:

The fact that God works everything together for good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28) is the basis for this entreaty.

This fact has undergirded all the saints of all the ages. William Law, the 18th century Christian writer, put it this way:

If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make it a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. For it is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it to a blessing. Could you, therefore, work miracles, you could not do more for yourself than by this thankful spirit, for it heals with a word speaking, and turns all that it touches into happiness.[3]

Some time ago, I visited Normandy and toured the beaches where Allied troops began their invasion of Nazi Europe during World War II, and I saw the bomb craters that pockmarked the ground. It reminded me of something I recently read about another set of bomb craters from another war. In his book, Church Planting Movements, David Garrison says that along the infamous Ho Chi Minh trail in Vietnam, the fields are peaceful now, but the landscape is still pockmarked with muddy ponds. He quotes a Cambodian Christian who said this:

“Those are bomb craters made by your American airplanes during the war. Last Easter, we baptized 70 new believers in that pond.”[4]

This represents the reversing effect of redemption. Do you remember in the children’s story, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, how it was winter in Narnia. Always winter and never Christmas. The evil witch had cast a spell over the land, and it was always dark and cold and snowy and frozen; everything was ice-covered. The first signs that the great lion, Aslan, had returned to Narnia is that the ice sickles began to drip, the snow began to melt, the sun began to break through the clouds, and the land began to thaw. The great Lion began to reverse things.

This is the reversing effect of redemption. Satan had brought about sin and pain and death and darkness; and when Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave, He triggered a reversal of fortunes.

- Out of sin came forgiveness.
- Out of death came life.
- Out of the tomb came the resurrection.
- Out of despair came hope.
- Out of sorrow came joy.
- Out of pain comes praise.
- Out of darkness comes light.

And when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ and we receive Him as our Savior and Lord and we love Him and are called according to His purpose, we are redeemed, and we have the unfailing promise—God’s Guarantee—that all our situations and circumstances in life will be reversed as needed, that all things will work together for our good and for His glory.

And because of that, it is rational and sensible and logical to be thankful in all things; “for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

Let me close by telling you how this worked out in the life of the father of one of my college friends.

I’ve spoken before about a former college hall mate of mine at Columbia Bible College, Chet Bitterman, who was kidnapped and murdered. He was a Wycliffe missionary in Colombia, South America; and he was seized by guerrillas who broke into his home on January 19, 1981, in full view of his terrified wife and children. Later his body was found in an abandoned van.

At the time of his kidnapping, the news was quickly transmitted to Wycliffe headquarters by shortwave radio and by phone to the Bitterman home in Pennsylvania. As Chet’s father, Chester Allen Bitterman, listened in stunned silence, he scratched notes on the pad before him: Radio message ... guest house in Bogotá broken into ... radio equipment taken ... Chet hostage?

As you can imagine, he was engulfed by a wave of depression and anger, and he stormed through the day in a rage—pacing, stalking, scheming, feeling like a bomb ready to explode. He visualized leading a commando force, tearing through the jungle to snatch his son from the hands of the thugs who held him. A portion of his rage was also directed toward God, and when Bitterman tried to pray, all that emerged were prayers of anger, hate, and vengeance.



But then, this verse, long ago memorized, appeared uninvited in his mind: ... in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. At first, the verse sounded like nonsense to Mr. Bitterman.

“Paul never had a hostage son,” he told himself. “It’s absurd to give thanks in a time like this.” But the verse came again: In everything give thanks. ... Then again. And again. Bitterman fought the verse with all his might, arguing and resisting. But he could not evade it: ... for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Finally, he fell to his knees in desperation and began sobbing, feeling in his heart he would never see Chet again. The hours passed. He prayed and pondered and wept; and slowly, very slowly, his heart changed. He began to sense blessings unrecognized, began to clasp a divine hand, began to grasp the power of prayer. And it was that verses that strengthened and sustained Mr. Bitterman through the long days and nights that followed.

None of us knows what we’ll face from day to day in this life; but we do know God’s commandments—the secrets of the sunny soul:

Rejoice always,  
Pray without ceasing,  
In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you

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[1] This story, related by a missionary named Donna in Eastern and Southern Africa, is told in *Voices of the Faithful: Inspiring Stories of Courage from Christians Serving Around the World with Beth Moore and Friends...*, Kim P. Davis, compiling Editor (Brentwood, TN: Integrity Publishers, 2005), p. 97.

[2] Quoted by D. A. Benton in *Executive Charisma* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), p. 53.

[3] William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), p. 173.

[4] David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), p. 74