

Thanks Living, Part 1 - In Everything Give Thanks

❑ Monday - An Impossible Commandment Apart From Christ.

In preparation for our American celebration of Thanksgiving which will soon be upon us, we turn our attention to those statements in Scripture directing God's people to give thanks to the Lord. And we come to perhaps the most difficult of these Scriptures, found in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, where the Apostle Paul declares, "In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." The difficulty of course lies in the all-inclusiveness of this requirement. Are we really supposed to give thanks in everything? Who is able to keep such a commandment? The fact is that, apart from Christ, no one can. Jesus said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5); nevertheless, "I can do all things through [Christ] who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). Dear Christian, let your own inability to give thanks in everything draw you closer to Christ this Thanksgiving in greater dependence on Him. Read Galatians 3:24

❑ Tuesday - Faith Put On Display Through Thanksgiving.

As we try to unravel the apostle Paul's directive to give thanks in everything, we might be tempted to think that Paul must have lived an incredibly pampered life, out of touch with the normal aches and pains that the rest of God's children experience (Acts 14:22; 1 Pet. 5:9). Actually, Paul's personal résumé was filled with great suffering (2 Cor. 11:23-28, cf. 1 Cor. 4:11-13). The apostle's body was striped with deep scars which elsewhere he calls his "brand-marks" for Jesus (Gal. 6:17). Yes, Paul knew deep emotional distress and acute physical pain even more than most. The truth is that God is intimately acquainted with all of our trials and not one tear escapes His notice (Psa. 56:8). And yet the Lord commands us to give thanks, especially during our trials, so that His grace in us and our faith in Him may be put on display. Read Psalm 50:23

❑ Wednesday - Giving Thanks for God's All-Sufficient Grace.

Practically speaking, how can thanksgiving possibly arise out of pain and suffering? For the answer, we look again at the apostle Paul's life. Three times Paul prayed and asked God to heal him of a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7-8). What Paul's affliction was we do not know, but it was "in the flesh," and he called it a "thorn," so undoubtedly it was painful. God had healed others through the apostle Paul (Acts 14:8-10), but on this occasion, when Paul asked for relief, God said no, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). And listen to Paul's response: "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:9-10, cf. 11:30). Read Philipians 4:11-13

❑ Thursday - Christ is Easier to See in the Dark.

In good times it is often hard to distinguish between the Christian's fruit of the Spirit of joy and the atheist's happiness. But on those dark days, when life is really difficult and the atheist's happiness evaporates, the light of Christ shining in the child of God is easier to see. And so, the command "in everything give thanks" is even more of a wartime than a peacetime commandment. For it is on those dark days that Christ shines as a beacon to the world, through that one thankful heart. Read Matthew 5:14-16

❑ Friday - A Thanksgiving Trophy.

When I read the book of Job, I think to myself, "I hope God never mentions my name when Satan is around" (cf. Job 1:6-12). Job was healthy, wealthy and wise before God brought up his name. But God wants to make Christ's bride a trophy of His grace. And so He allows even His choicest servants to be sorely tested, so that the world might see the authenticity of His work in them. Thankfully, God is more concerned for your eternal welfare and reward, Christian, than your short-term comfort. Read 1 Peter 1:3-9