

In SPIRIT and TRUTH

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE OF THANKSGIVING DAY

In Everything, Give Thanks



Once again, it's that time of the year that families and friends all over America, will soon find themselves together in celebration of Thanksgiving Day. It is one of the few times of the year (if not the only time) that many will actually be seated together, taking a moment to acknowledge God, and thanking Him for His blessings in their lives. However, the Thanksgiving tradition *is not* the focus of this article. Instead, I would like to expound upon a passage of scripture found in 1 Thessalonians 5:18...

“IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

Notice in this verse, we are told specifically, to *give thanks, IN EVERYTHING*; not “*for everything*”. Even though there is so much that we can be thankful for (as far as blessings are concerned), this verse paraphrased actually means, *in any and every situation or circumstance that we may be faced with, we are to give God thanks!* For I believe that acknowledging God with a thankful heart, is the key to remaining steadfast in the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58), and not allowing the cares of this world to discourage us.

It is sad, but true, that many Christians become angry with God or others when their faith is *tried* and things happen that they cannot control or do not understand. Yes, it is true that God is all-powerful and He can do *anything*; yet, there are times that He may choose not to intervene in ways that we think He should. When I consider the things that often happen in this world, that may cause us to lose our joy, I must confess that I *am not* compelled to give thanks for them... for hideous crimes that occur daily, catastrophic destruction, or any of the other numerous ways that the Enemy creates havoc in our lives. However, I can *in every situation*, give God thanks, because I know that He, who is *the Almighty*, remains very much in control.

A Time For Every Purpose

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;”
Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

(Some may think) *“In everything, give thanks?! Wait a minute, is this really possible?”* Well, as disciples of Jesus Christ, it should not be difficult to perceive that we can *indeed* give thanks to God, *in everything!* For those who have made the decision to follow Christ, we should understand that our lives are not our own, for we have been “bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:20); therefore, nothing happens to us haphazardly, or randomly, by chance. According to the word of God, all those who are His were *called and sanctified* (set apart) for His purpose and His pleasure, even before we were formed in the womb (Jeremiah 1:4-5, Revelations 4:11).

Nevertheless, there are those who ignorantly blame or reject God because of their plights in life; like those who have experienced the loss of a child or other loved ones. Is it not written in Ecclesiastes 3:2, that *“there is a time to be born, AND a time to die”*? What right do we have to argue with the Creator, who has determined our number of years on earth before we were even born? Instead of being angry with a sovereign God, we should choose to *“give thanks”* for *whatever* time we are given with those we love, having the understanding that *all souls belong to God* (Ezekiel 18:4).

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to his purpose.”
Romans 8:28



“In everything, give thanks....”

As I meditated upon the remainder of verse... *“for this the is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”*, I thought of the many things that Christians sometimes think we should be exempt from facing, because we follow Christ. However, there is much to be learned from the Apostle Paul, who zealously labored in the Lord, yet suffered a lifetime of tribulation and much persecution.

Thankful in Tribulation

“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”
Acts 5:41

It was not uncommon for those who followed the teachings of Jesus Christ to suffer such persecution as experienced by Peter, Paul, and the other apostles. And many of those in the early church learned to give thanks and praise to God during persecution from them. As a matter of fact, the word of God specifically tells us that, *tribulation* is also the will of God concerning His church, and that *“we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”* Acts 14:22b

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13

I am *most astounded* by the testimonies of suffering in the life of the Apostle Paul regarding his journeys in ministry...

(Apostle Paul) "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils (endangered) of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness."
2 Corinthians 11:24-27

And despite all that Paul had experienced in pain and the suffering of his flesh, he still concludes the passage *giving praise to God...*

"If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knows that I lie not." 2 Corinthians 11:30-31

If our brother Paul could give thanks to God under such dire circumstances, what excuse do most saints have for murmuring and complaining about our (comparatively) light afflictions?

Now there are many who may have difficulty processing Paul's attitude towards suffering, as they reflect upon their own hardships, especially since the global Pandemic of 2019.

However, I am of a strong belief that the Lord has used The Pandemic to cause many in the church to examine themselves and return to their "first love", thus compelling us to trust Him more for the uncertain future.

"Be careful for nothing; but *in every thing* by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God." Philippians 4:6

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ephesians 5:20

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."
Colossians 3:17

I believe that these Scriptures should not be just words of comfort when we begin to fear, but they should be reminders that *we are to practice a lifestyle of faith*; for God's word is truth (John 17:17); and it is life (Matthew 4:4) to those who apply it, as "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22).

As when we began to apply the word of God, even offering the sacrifice of praise in every situation (according to Hebrews 13:15), only then will we begin to understand the true love of God. Then we will be able to give Him thanks *in everything*, for it is He who causes us to triumph in Christ Jesus!

"Now thanks be unto God, (who) always causes us to triumph in Christ..."
2 Corinthians 2:14a

