

# Thanksgiving-Quotes, Devotionals, Illustrations

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Thanksgiving leads to Thanksliving.

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The joy of living comes from a heart of thanksgiving.

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Too many focus on ThanksHAVING—instead of ThanksGIVING

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ACTS method of prayer - Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.

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THANKING GOD IN YOUR TRIALS TURNS BURDENS INTO BLESSINGS.

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As we thank God for our rights, let's not forget the rights of God. —Herbert Vander Lugt

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

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**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."

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

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**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).

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**Ever Grateful** - In the early 1900s, a policeman was walking his beat in Chicago when he observed a man standing before a little mission. He had removed his hat, and the officer thought he was acting rather strangely. Thinking the man might be drunk or ill, the policeman approached him. He noticed that his eyes were closed, so he nudged him and said, "What's the matter, Mac? Are you sick?" The man looked up and smiled. "No, sir. My name is Billy Sunday I was converted right here in this mission. I never pass this way without taking the opportunity, if possible, to stand quietly for a moment and whisper a prayer of thanksgiving."

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**Thanksgiving** implies that the grateful person is in perfect submission to the will of God, however His will is manifest. Why? Because it is only when one is fully convinced that God is working all things together for good that he or she can really give God being truly thankful. In Phil 4:6-note Paul is cautioning against a whining, complaining, murmuring spirit which is really an expression of one's lack of faith in God's goodness.

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**Remembering to Thank People** - 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."

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**Finding the Blessings with a Thankful Heart** - 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 clumsy fingers, and be unable to detect them; but let me take a magnet, and sweep through it, and it would draw to itself the most invisible particles. 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 some heavenly blessings. - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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**Do Not Delay Expressing Appreciation** - A young man was an organist in a large church in Texas. He was a fine musician, but, being blind, was unable to read in the faces of his audience the great pleasure his music was giving. His caressing touch on the keyboard sent out through its great pipes the songs of his soul. People would talk to each other about the beauty and the uplifting influence of his music. Often his music sent tears down furrowed cheeks. But no one ever thought to tell the organist, who was longing to hear a word of response. One morning it was announced that he would not play after that service. His decision was final; another organist must be secured. After the service a woman who had enjoyed his music thoroughly went up to him, and said, very earnestly, "I am sorry you will not play for us any longer. I have enjoyed your music so much. It helped me greatly; it soothed and comforted me when I sorrowed. I have thought many times I would tell you what an inspiration I have received through your music. I thank you for it." The young man's voice faltered and tears rushed to his sightless eyes as he whispered, "Oh, why didn't you tell me sooner? I needed comfort and inspiration, too." - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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### Thankful In All Things

March 11, 2013 — by Jennifer Benson Schuldt

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

In everything give thanks. —1 Thessalonians 5:18

My daughter is allergic to peanuts. Her sensitivity is so acute that eating even the tiniest fragment of a peanut threatens her life. As a result, we scrutinize food package labels. We carry a pre-filled syringe of medicine (to treat allergic reactions) wherever we go. And, when we eat out, we call ahead and quiz the wait staff about the restaurant's menu items.

Despite these precautions, I still feel concerned—both for her current safety and for her future safety. This situation is not something I would naturally be thankful about. Yet, God's Word challenges: "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:18). There's no getting around it. God wants us to pray with thanksgiving when the future is uncertain, when heartbreak hits, and when shortfalls come.

It's hard to be grateful in difficulties, but it's not impossible. Daniel "prayed and gave thanks" (Dan. 6:10), knowing that his life was in danger. Jonah called out "with the voice of thanksgiving" (Jonah 2:9) while inside a fish! These examples, coupled with God's promise that He will work all things together for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28), can inspire us to be thankful in all things.

Thanks for roses by the wayside,

Thanks for thorns their stems contain.

Thanks for homes and thanks for fireside

Thanks for hope, that sweet refrain! —Hultman

In all circumstances, we can give thanks that God has not left us on our own.

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It is said that the early Christians never met without invoking God's blessing and never parted without a word of thanksgiving.

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After drought had parched the western plains and experts predicted no end in sight, Lt. Gov. George Nigh of Oklahoma proclaimed a statewide day of prayer for rain to be observed by churches and individuals across the state on Sunday, February 29, 1976. On March 2 and 3, up to 11/2 inches of rain fell on the drought area.... A day of thanksgiving was held the following Sunday ..."

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[Stephen Olford](#) in a discussion of an effective "**Quiet Time**" ([see onsite discussion of Quiet Time](#)) wrote these words about prayer:

Another essential is a prayer list or prayer cycle—something to keep reminding you to emphasize a different request for each day. My wife and I use one that works this way:

Monday: **M** is for missionaries.

Tuesday: **T** is for thanksgiving for wonderful answers to prayer.

Wednesday: **W** is for workers.

Thursday: **T** is for tasks—our job at the church or the ministry God has given us.

Friday: **F** is for our families.

Saturday: **S** is for the saints—especially young Christians, that Christ might be formed in them.

Sunday: **S** is for sinners—in particular, the gospel services for which we are responsible

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**Think of Those Who Have Less Than You** - A mother and her two little children were destitute. In the depth of winter they were nearly frozen, and the mother took the cellar door off the hinges and set it up in front of the corner where they crouched down to sleep so that some of the draft and cold might be kept from them. One of the children whispered to her, "Mother, what do those poor children do who have no cellar door to put up in front of them?" - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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**Two Little Words** - A doctor wrote a letter of thanks to a schoolteacher for having given him so much encouragement when he had been in her class 30 years before. He later received this reply: "I want you to know what your note meant to me. I am an old lady in my eighties, living alone in a small room, cooking my own meals, lonely, and seeming like the last leaf on the tree. You will be interested to know that I taught school for 50 years, and yours is the first letter of appreciation I have ever received. It came on a cold, blue morning and cheered my lonely old heart as nothing has cheered me in many years." - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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**Go Ahead and Embarrass Thankless People** - A mother took her three children to a restaurant to eat breakfast one morning. The smallest of the three children sat at the very end of the row. She saw other people being served and eating right away without stopping to say thanks. It surprised her. When the food was served to her, she shouted out to her mother: "Mommy, don't people ask the blessing in this place?" You can well imagine the embarrassment of those present. Her mother tried to hush her. But, the waitress said to little Mary, "Yes, we do, sister! You give thanks!" Amazingly, at that very moment everybody else also bowed their heads and offered thanks. Embarrass them and maybe you will bring them to their senses to say "Thank you, God." - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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**If You Think, You Must Thank** - Sir Moses Montefiore, the Jewish philanthropist, had as the motto of his family, "Think and Thank." In the old Anglo-Saxon, thankfulness means "thankfulness." Thinking of all God's goodness draws forth gratitude. - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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**"In All Things"** - "Gratitude is what always spoils life when it is left out." A thankful spirit enables one to praise God even when circumstances are difficult. Alexander Whyte, the Scottish preacher, always began his prayers with an expression of gratitude. One cold, miserable day his people wondered what he would say. He prayed, "We thank Thee, O Lord, that it is not always like this." - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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**I Give Thee Humble Thanks** - "Giving thanks for all things . . ." (Eph. 5:20).

For all the gifts that Thou dost send,  
For every kind and loyal friend,  
For prompt supply of all my need,  
For all that is good in word or deed,  
For gift of health along life's way,  
For strength to work from day to day—  
I give Thee humble thanks.

For ready hands to help and cheer,  
For listening ears Thy voice to hear,  
For yielded tongue Thy love to talk,  
For willing feet, Thy paths to walk,  
For open eyes Thy Word to read,  
For loving heart, Thy will to heed—  
I give Thee humble thanks.

For Christ who came from heaven above,  
For the cross and His redeeming love,  
For His mighty power to seek and save,

For His glorious triumph o'er the grave.  
For the lovely mansions in the sky,  
For His blessed coming bye and bye—  
I give Thee humble thanks.

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#### **Observing Thanksgiving** "Count it all joy" (James 1:2).

Count your blessings instead of your crosses;  
Count your gains instead of your losses.  
Count your joys instead of your woes;  
Count your friends instead of your foes.  
Count your smiles instead of your tears;  
Count your courage instead of your fears.  
Count your full years instead of your lean;  
Count your kind deeds instead of your mean.  
Count your health instead of your wealth;  
Count on God instead of yourself.

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#### **Harvest of the Heart at Thanksgiving**

Thanksgiving is the harvest of the heart  
After the fruit and grain are stored away.  
The quiet season of remembering,  
The moment when we pause to praise and pray.

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**How Rich Are You?** - They huddled inside the storm door—two children in ragged, outgrown coats. "Any old papers, Lady?" they asked a passerby. She was very busy; she wanted to say no, until she looked down at their feet wrapped only in thin little sandals, sopped with sleet. "Come on in and I will make you a cup of cocoa," she said. There was no conversation. Their soggy sandals left marks on the clean hearthstone.

Cocoa and cake would fortify against the chill outside. After serving them, she went back to the kitchen and started on her household budget as they sat enjoying the warmth. After a few minutes, the silence in the front room struck through to her. She looked in. The girl held her empty cup in her hands, looking at it. The boy asked in a flat voice, "Lady, are you rich?" "Am I rich? Mercy no!" She looked at her shabby slipcovers. The girl put her cup back in its saucer carefully. "Your cups match your saucers." Her voice was old with a hunger that was not of the stomach.

They left then, holding their bundles of papers against the wind. They had not said thank you. They did not need to. They had done more than that. Plain blue pottery cups and saucers—but they matched. She tested the potatoes and stirred the gravy. "Potatoes and brown gravy, a roof over our heads, my husband with a good, steady job—these things matched, too," she mused. She moved the chairs back from the fire and tidied the living room. The muddy prints of small sandals were still set upon the hearth, and she let them be. "I want them there in case I ever forget how very rich I am," she told herself. - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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**Corrie ten Boom** - I love what Corrie ten Boom once taught me. She said, "Jill, people thank me so much, and it used to worry me because I didn't want to get a big head. So I began to collect those compliments like flowers. 'Thank you,' I'd say. 'Thank you, thank you, thank you.' Then at the end of the day I'd kneel down and I'd say, 'Here You are Jesus, they're all Yours.'"

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**A Thank You Note** - We attended the wedding of an acquaintance's son. Because we did not know the young man or his bride, we decided to send them a practical household gift, a fire extinguisher. Apparently, the couple mass-produced their thank-you notes because we received a card saying: "Thank you very much for the nice wedding gift. We look forward to using it soon." - Jeff Carroll

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Giving thanks always for all things. Ephesians 5:20

In the autobiography of the late Dr. Clarence E. McCartney, the following story is told: Two men were passing through a field in the country when they were charged by an enraged bull. They started for the nearest fence, but it was soon apparent that they couldn't make it before the animal reached them. One said to the other, "Put up a prayer, John. We're in for it!" But John answered, "I can't. I never made a public prayer in my life." "But you must," said his companion, "the bull will soon be upon us." "All right," panted John, "I'll give you the only prayer I know, the one my father used to repeat at the table: 'O Lord, for what we are about to receive, make us truly thankful!' " We may smile at this story; yet it is true that no matter what trials we may face, or how deep the waters through which we must pass, the true Christian should give thanks "always for all things."

Traveling to Cleveland for meetings, I had a tire blow out at seventy miles an hour. As I pulled the car to a stop without losing control, I breathed a prayer of thanks. But I forgot one thing—I didn't praise God for the blowout! In fact, I must confess that I was rather exasperated. It was dark and I was running a little behind schedule. I was tempted to murmur and complain, whereas I should have been thankful even for that seeming in-convenience. As children of God, it is wonderful to know that we can give thanks "always for all things unto God," because "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

In a world filled with trials, disappointments, and discouragements, what a joy to realize that things never happen by chance to the true believer. Someone has wisely said, "The experiences of life can either make you bitter or better." The key to becoming "better" is to give "thanks always for all things!"

'Midst sun or rain, 'midst good or ill,  
Through all my earthly days,  
May nothing bitter quell, O Lord,  
My grateful song of praise! —G. B. Adams

If you find yourself wearing a "spirit of heaviness," try a "garment of praise"!

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**Those Who Do Not Give Thanks** - A godly farmer was asked to dine with a well-known gentleman. While there, he asked a blessing at the table as he was accustomed to do at home. His host said jeeringly, "That is old fashioned; it is not customary nowadays for well-educated people to pray before they eat." The farmer answered that with him it was customary, but that some of those on his farm never prayed over their food. "Ah, then," said the gentleman, "they are sensible and enlightened. Who are they?" "My pigs," the farmer answered. - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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**Prayer and the The Battle of Lexington, April 19, 1775** - The Shot Heard Round the World - "A few farmers had assembled, willing to defend their homes, but determined not to commence hostilities, and unsuspecting of the sudden onslaught. The firing was soon over, and the royal troops remained masters of the field; but **the sacrifice of that little band revolutionized the world.** It was the first scene in the drama which was to carry with it the destinies of mankind." From this inauspicious beginning grew the American Revolution and the birth of the nation of the United States of America. What is less well known was what was transpiring "behind the scenes."

The Providential hand of God is evident in this event. About one month earlier, on March 22, the Governor of Connecticut had called upon the colony to observe a **"Day of public Fasting and Prayer...** that God would graciously pour out his Holy Spirit on us, to bring us to a thorough repentance and effectual reformation;... That He would restore, preserve and secure the liberties of this, and all the other American Colonies, and make this land a mountain of Holiness and habitation of Righteousness forever.— That God would preserve and confirm the Union of the Colonies in the pursuit and practice of that Religion and virtue which will honor Him..." **What day had [Governor Jonathan Trumbull](#) (Ed: A student of theology with license to preach) selected for them to be praying?** "Wednesday, the nineteenth Day of April" – the very day that fighting had begun! God had an entire colony praying on the day that the **"[shot heard 'round the world](#)"** occurred, which eventually led to the independence of the United States and a new era of liberty for mankind.

**[Read the Full Story of Prayer, Providence and the Battle of Lexington!](#)**

The role of prayer and birth of America is further documented -

During times of calamity or crisis both church and civil authorities would proclaim **days of fasting and prayer**; and when God responded with deliverance and blessing, they would proclaim **days of thanksgiving and prayer**. From 1620 until the American

Revolution at least 1000 such days were proclaimed by governments at all levels (**Ed**: So much for the so-called division of church and state foisted on us by the anti-God crowd! Fortunately there was no ACLU or Supreme Court at that time!), and many more by various churches. ([Click for full list of these days of fasting and prayer](#)) This continued during our struggle for independence, through our first century as a nation, and, in some measure, even up until today....

On October 17, 1777, [British General Burgoyne was defeated by Colonial forces at Saratoga](#) Earlier, General Howe was supposed to have marched north to join Burgoyne's 11,000 men at Saratoga. However, in his haste to leave London for a holiday, Lord North forgot to sign the dispatch to General Howe. The dispatch was pigeon-holed and not found until years later in the archives of the British army. This inadvertence, plus the fact that contrary winds kept British reinforcements delayed at sea for three months, totally altered the outcome at Saratoga in favor of America.<sup>1</sup>

In response to the victory, the Continental Congress proclaimed a day of thanksgiving and praise to God. In part, they stated,

*"Forasmuch as it is the indispensable duty of all men to adore the superintending [providence](#) of Almighty God, . . . and it having pleased Him in His abundant mercy not only to continue to us the innumerable bounties of His common providence, but also to smile upon us in the prosecution of a just and necessary war for the defence and establishment of our inalienable rights and liberties, particularly in that He hath been pleased . . . to crown our arms with most signal success: it is therefore recommended . . . to set apart Thursday, the 18th day of December, for solemn thanksgiving and praise."*

They recommended for everyone to confess their sins and humbly ask God, "through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of remembrance" and thus He then would be able to pour out His blessings upon every aspect of the nation.

This is the official resolution of our Congress during the Revolutionary War! No wonder the blessings of God flowed upon this nation. Similar resolutions were also issued by the Commander of the American army, [George Washington](#).

Read the entire fascinating article [America Relies on God - Public Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving During the American Revolution](#) - **We need to see a return of the modern church to days of fasting and prayer for our nation....before it is too late!**

An Added Anecdotal Story - You may read in your United States history how [George Washington](#) found rest and relief in prayer during the trying times he and his soldiers passed through at [Valley Forge](#). With all the cares and anxieties of that time upon him, he used to have recourse to prayer. One day a farmer approaching the camp heard an earnest voice. On coming nearer, he saw George Washington on his knees, his cheeks wet with tears, praying to God. The farmer returned home and said to his wife: "George Washington will succeed! George Washington will succeed! The Americans will secure their independence!" "What makes you think so, Isaac?" asked his wife. The farmer replied: "I heard him pray, Hannah, out in the woods today, and the Lord will surely hear his prayer. He will, Hannah; thee may rest assured He will."

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## The Work Of Thanksgiving

Psalms 30:12 "To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee forever" (Psalms 30:12).

The psalmist is David, the occasion is the stopping of the Divine pestilence after David had the people numbered. Statistic keeping is sometimes not a good thing and can cause much trouble as it did here. The last verse of this psalm speaks to us about the work of Thanksgiving—what it does and requires.

### FIRST—THE PRAISE IN THANKSGIVING

"To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee." Thanksgiving will praise God as we have noted many times. Here music is involved. Some music today thanks God for His blessing. But how ever it is done Thanksgiving will honor and praise the Lord. That is one of the works of Thanksgiving, and it is why we should express our thanks to God frequently.

### SECOND—THE PROFESSION IN THANKSGIVING

"Not be silent." We are talking here about a public profession of faith. Being a silent Christian is like being a secret believer, as was Joseph of Arimathea. God has little use for secret discipleship (Matthew 10:32, 33). When you are ashamed to bow your head and give thanks for your food in a public eating place you are playing the secret disciple game and you will be a big loser. David in the circumstance of this psalm kept nothing secret but in the thanking of God for stopping the pestilence. He kept not silent but publically gave honor to Jehovah God in spite of the chastening hand of God upon his people. To be a faithful testimony we must be public regardless of our situation. I remember seeing a sailor bow his head before he ate and said to myself, 'He must be a Christian.' Later I found out that the same sailor noticed at the same meal that I bowed my head before I ate. He had the same thought as I did which we both confirmed. We prayed publically before we ate and were not silent about our faith in so doing, but evidenced our faith in thanksgiving. Your profession of faith is evident in the giving of thanks.

### THIRD—THE PRACTICE OF THANKSGIVING

"I will give thanks unto thee forever." Two lessons are given here about the practice of thanksgiving.

- The passion for thanksgiving. "I will give thanks." This statement denotes the Psalmist passion to give thanks. Thanksgiving is not easy. You can be sneered and jeered for the act of thanksgiving. I learned that fact in the Navy, but gave thanks anyway. You must be diligent or you will not give thanks. It takes effort to give thanks.
  - The perpetuity of thanksgiving. "Forever." Thanksgiving is not a once only deed. It is a continuous act. We certainly have continuous reasons for thanksgiving. God's blessings are "new every morning" (Lamentations 3:23). New blessings come every day, therefore we are always, every day, to give thanks "forever." - John Butler
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#### Thank God for Answered Prayer

Many successful people have acknowledged in their memoirs that whenever they came to an impasse in their work and were completely baffled, they sought wisdom from the Lord.

This was true in the life of the inventor of the telegraph, Samuel F. B. Morse. In an interview, George Hervey inquired, "Professor Morse, when you were making your experiments at the university, did you ever come to a standstill, not knowing what to do next?" "I've never discussed this with anyone, so the public knows nothing about it. But now that you ask me, I'll tell you frankly—I prayed for more light" "And did God give you the wisdom and knowledge you needed?" Yes He did," said Morse. "That's why I never felt I deserved the honors that came to me from America and Europe because of the invention associated with my name. I had made a valuable application of the use of electrical power, but it was all through God's help. It wasn't because I was superior to other scientists. When the Lord wanted to bestow this gift on mankind. He had to use someone. I'm just grateful He chose to reveal it to me." In view of these facts, it's not surprising that the inventor's first message over the telegraph was: "What hath God wrought!" Every time you face a perplexing problem, seek wisdom from above. And when the answer comes, always be sure to thank God and give Him all the glory.

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Steve Fronk spotted a great bumper sticker shortly before April 15th. It read:

"Thank God we don't get all the government we pay for!"

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#### I Will Watch You

One pagan said after receiving a gospel tract from a zealous missionary, "Thank you for this tract, now I will watch your tracks and decide about becoming a Christian."

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**Two Hundred Miles of Thanks** - If you are grateful, say so! Thanksgiving is only half said until you have done something to show your thankfulness. A missionary to India was traveling through a city and stopped to speak to a man beside the road. He talked with the man for a time about Jesus. Then, having to travel on, he gave him a few pages of the Bible in the man's language. The Indian read them and was thrilled to learn of Jesus. To show his gratitude, the man measured the footprints left by the missionary, and made a pair of moccasins. He then traveled 200 miles to give them to the missionary as an expression of thanks. The missionary's life was enriched by the gift, but the Indian man was much more enriched because he had expressed his thanks. Have you ever tried to give 200 miles of thanks? Try it—you will be a better person because of it. - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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It is good to give thanks to the LORD. Psalm 92:1, Phillipians 4:6, Colossians 4:2

Finding it difficult to be thankful? Fulton Oursler learned thankfulness from a woman who helped care for him when he was a little boy. She told him, "Looking for good things is a kind of game an old preacher taught me to play. Take this morning. I woke up and thought, what's there to praise God for today? You know what? I couldn't think of a thing! Then from the kitchen came the most delicious odor that ever tickled my nose. Coffee! 'Much obliged, Lord, for the coffee,' I said, 'and much obliged too for the smell of it.'"

Many years later, Oursler stood at the bedside of that woman as she lay dying. Seeing her in much pain, he wondered if she could still find something to be grateful for. Just then she opened her eyes, looked at the others gathered around her bedside, and quietly said with a smile, "Much obliged, Lord, for such fine friends."

I can't think of a better time than today to begin looking for things to be grateful for. It won't matter what words you use whether you say, "Thank You, Father," or "Much obliged, Lord." The important thing is to say it! —H. V. L.

IF YOU CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR, YOU HAVE A POOR MEMORY.

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**Spiritual Maturity** One day, Johann Tauler of Strosbourg met a peasant. "God give you a good day, my friend," he greeted him. The peasant answered briskly, "I thank God I never have a bad day." Tauler, astonished, kept silent for a moment. Tauler then added,

"God give you a happy life, my friend." The peasant replied composedly, "I thank God I am never unhappy." "Never unhappy!" cried Tauler bewildered, "What do you mean?" "Well," came the reply, "when it is sunshine—I thank God, when it rains—I thank God, when I have plenty—I thank God, when I am hungry—I thank God; and since God's will is my will, and whatever pleases God pleases me, why should I say that I am unhappy when I am not?" Tauler looked upon him with awe. "Who are you," he asked. "I am a king," said the peasant. "A king?" Tauler asked, "Where is your kingdom?" The peasant smiled and whispered softly, "In my heart." - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many Acts of thanksgiving to God. (2 Corinthians 9:12)

Two girls gather grapes. One is happy for their taste and sweetness, but the other complains about the seeds.

Two women examine the same bush. One smells the roses, but the other can only see the thorns.

Two men hike a mountain. One enjoys the breathtaking view, but the other complains about the exertion it took to get there.

Two children sit down to dinner. One bows his head in gratitude, but the other complains about having to eat vegetables.

Have you ever found yourselves complaining about what others would consider to be a blessing? Most anyone with the resources to own this book has more to be thankful for than a large percentage of people who live in the world.

As the gospel songwriter Andraé Crouch asked, "How can I say thanks for the things You have done for me—Things so underserved, yet You give to prove Your love for me?" How do we express gratitude to God? As we will see today, one of the joyous outcomes of our giving is that it overflows in thanksgiving to God.....

Giving Inspires Gratitude - "Thanksgiving to God" dominated Paul's thoughts in this chapter. He repeated this emphasis three times in this short section (2 Cor. 9:11-12, 15). Thanksgiving is the attitude of heart that distinguishes the believer from the nonbeliever.

In Romans 1:21a, Paul noted, "For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude." Unbelievers do not comprehend that everything they have came from the hand of God. Therefore, they fail to respond with thanksgiving. Believers, on the other hand, "enter His presence with thanksgiving" (Ps. 95:2) and bring their requests before him "with thanksgiving" (Phil. 4:6).

In our present context it is the offering for the saints in Jerusalem that inspires expressions of thanksgiving. In 2 Corinthians 9:11, Paul noted that their generosity "produces thanksgiving to God through us." This verse is reminiscent of an earlier reference to thanksgiving found in 2 Corinthians 4:15, "For all this is because of you, so that grace, extended through more and more people, may cause thanksgiving to overflow to God's glory."

The context of that verse is instructive. Paul, perhaps speaking of himself and his coworkers, declared that they were but clay vessels into which God had poured his treasure to display his extraordinary power. Thus, it is resurrection power, embodied in the believer, that God uses to extend his grace "through more and more people," causing "thanksgiving to overflow to God's glory" (2 Cor. 4:15).

Returning to our present context now, we can see that it was the act of faith in sowing the seed—seed provided by God—that became the instrument through which God extended and demonstrated his grace to the saints in Jerusalem. This demonstration of grace caused the saints in Jerusalem to give thanks to God. Thus, it is most appropriate to state that their generosity was the trigger that produced this.

His language is even more effusive in 2 Corinthians 9:2, when he declared that their ministry not only supplied a need "but it is also overflowing in many Acts of thanksgiving to God." The meaning of this is made clear in verse 13.

You might say there was a double dose of thanksgiving involved in all of this. First the Corinthians produced thanksgiving through their generosity, and then the recipients of that gift in turn thanked God, producing an overflow of thanksgiving to him.

Paul can't conclude this section without one final note of thanksgiving in verse 15. "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift." The source of all grace and the model for all giving is God. The indescribable or inexpressible gift is the gift of God's Son. Paul offered a wonderful commentary on this in Romans 8:32, when he wrote, "He did not even spare His own Son, but offered Him up for us all; how will He not also with Him grant us everything?" You may recall that Paul had already appealed to the grace expressed by the Lord Jesus Christ who became poor through the offering of himself (2 Cor. 8:9) as the framework for Christian living and giving.

Have you ever thought that your ministry of giving is one avenue God gives you to produce overflowing thanksgiving to him? How it must please the heart of God when he sees his children trusting his Word, sowing his seed, and meeting the needs of others! When you write that check for your tithes and offerings—as you place it in the offering plate—listen by faith to hear the sound of thanksgiving crashing the gates of heaven. - Ken Hemphill

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**Their Money Is Worth** - Rudyard Kipling at one time was so popular that his writings were getting ten shillings per word. A few college students, however, did not appreciate Kipling's writings; they facetiously sent him a letter and enclosed ten shillings. It read, "Please, send us your best word." They got back a letter from Kipling that said, "Thanks." - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever. --Psalm 30:12

While I was teaching at a Christian college, a talented young man pushed his way into my life. He needed one more course to



graduate, so he decided that I should give him an independent study in writing. He would be everlastingly grateful if I would just do this—even though it required extra work on my part. The college dean agreed to the idea because of the young man's abilities.

What a headache! He skipped appointments, missed deadlines, and rejected my evaluations of his writing. He even turned in the last assignment just hours before graduation.

After all that was done for him, you'd think he would have been grateful. But he didn't express one word of thanks on graduation day nor in all the years since.

I don't ever want to be that kind of person. I would rather be like David. When he was in deep trouble, he called out to the Lord for help (Ps. 28:1-2). Afterward, he remembered to give God thanks for delivering him (vv.6-7). In fact, David's heart of gratitude toward the Lord is evident throughout the book of Psalms.

What about us? Do we have an ungrateful response to the Lord's graciousness? Or are we, like David, unceasingly expressing our thanks to God for His goodness? --D C Egner

#### Putting It Into Practice

Is there someone whose kindness I've been taking for granted? How can I show that person gratitude today? In what ways can I show my gratitude to God?

When you count your blessings,  
it adds up to thankfulness

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**Why Only One Day for Thanksgiving?** - Charles Dickens said that we are somewhat mixed up here in America. He told an audience that instead of having one Thanksgiving Day each year we should have 364. "Use that one day just for complaining and griping," he said. "Use the other 364 days to thank God each day for the many blessings He has showered upon you." - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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#### PHILIPPIANS 2:14

During the years I was a medical doctor, I had a number of patients who seemed to enjoy complaining about their physical ills. I would examine them and not find a single thing wrong, yet all they did was whine and complain. Pains here, aches there, and as one expressed it, "I just feel no good all over." In my opinion, it was all imaginary. It seemed to me that if they would only start to count their blessings they would soon forget their troubles.

How different the case of the very old woman, penniless and weak, who was asked, "Auntie, how is your health?" "Oh, I have so much to be thankful for," she replied. "I have only two teeth left, but thank God, they are opposite each other!"

Before you begin another day, stop to count your blessings instead of dwelling on your troubles. —MRD

#### INSTEAD OF COMPLAINING, COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

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**Living Gratitude** - We may offer fervent expressions of gratitude in the prayer meeting and sing aloud in the praise service, but our real sense of indebtedness must manifest itself in more practical ways. A king had saved the life of one of his subjects, and every day afterwards she came to his gate with protestations of gratitude. "I can never begin to pay the debt I owe him," she bewailed. One day the king, in his chariot, passed her cottage. He saw in her garden a tree bearing some luscious fruit, and was seized with a desire to taste it. When he sent his servant with the request that he be given some of the fruit to take to the king, she replied that she only had enough fruit to meet her own needs. She thus laid bare the fact that her expressions of gratitude had been mere words which lacked the element of truthfulness. - Bible Illustrations – Practical Bible Illustrations From Yesterday and Today.

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#### Thankless "Victims"

The careless soul is ever complaining, explains Scottish writer and preacher George MacDonald. "For the good that comes to him, he gives no thanks—who is there to thank? At the disappointments that befall him he grumbles—there must be someone to blame!"

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**Thankful for Leprosy** - Once a Christian Leper in India was heard to pray: "I thank God that he laid leprosy on me because of the

lepers I have been able to lead to Christ." He saw his leprosy as part of God's saving plan. That the souls of the lepers might be washed white in the tide of the Savior's blood, God had permitted him to become a leper. - Bible Illustrations – Practical Bible Illustrations From Yesterday and Today.

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## REASONS FOR PRAISE

Praise ye the Lord. Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good. Psalm 106:1

Years ago a believer with an unusual spirit of gratitude regularly attended the services of a mission in Chicago. Being a black man, he was often the victim of discrimination by the world; yet he radiated Christian joy. One day entering the mission with a bandage on his thumb, he explained that he had smashed it with a hammer. Then he added, "But praise the Lord. I have my thumb yet!" On another occasion he purchased a steak with his meager earnings and was on his way home with it when a shoelace became untied. As he laid the package on the side-walk to tie his shoe, a large dog suddenly grabbed the choice piece of meat and made off with it. Later, as this humble believer recounted his exasperating experience, he said with characteristic cheerfulness, "Praise the Lord. I still have my appetite left!" He always found reasons to be grateful.

People who themselves have never discovered the inner joy this dear Christian brother possessed may find it hard to believe these accounts, nevertheless they are true. No matter how skeptical they may be, however, all Christians must agree that the inspired writer of Psalm 92 was right when he declared, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." The unsaved man does not understand God, and is often unaware of reasons for thanksgiving. But the devout believer, assured of His goodness, ever rejoices in the knowledge that righteousness will triumph, and those who love the Lord will be vindicated.

On this special day, we should find many reasons to say with the Psalmist, "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever.

Ten thousand thousand precious gifts  
My daily thanks employ;  
Nor is the least a cheerful heart  
To taste those gifts with joy. —Watts

Hem your blessings with praise lest they unravel!

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## Giving Thanks

February 26, 2013 — by Julie Ackerman Link

Read: John 11:32-44

Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me." —John 11:41

A tragedy left a family with a void that nothing could fill. A toddler chasing a cat wandered into the road and was run over by a delivery truck. A 4-year-old watched in shocked silence as her parents cradled the lifeless body of her little sister. For years, the cold emptiness of that moment encased the family in sadness. Feelings were frozen. The only comfort was numbness. Relief was unimaginable.

Author Ann Voskamp was the 4-year-old, and the sorrow surrounding her sister's death formed her view of life and God. The world she grew up in had little concept of grace. Joy was an idea that had no basis in reality.

As a young mother, Voskamp set out to discover the elusive thing the Bible calls joy. The words for joy and grace come from the Greek word *chairō*, which she found out is at the center of the Greek word for thanksgiving. Could it be that simple? she wondered. To test her discovery, Voskamp decided to give thanks for 1,000 gifts she already had. She started slowly but soon gratefulness was flowing freely.

Just as Jesus gave thanks before, not after, raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:41), Voskamp discovered that giving thanks brought to life feelings of joy that had died along with her sister. Joy comes from thanksgiving.

Lord, I thank You that You have the power  
to raise the dead. May the feelings of joy  
that arise from our thanksgiving be seeds of  
grace to those who are afraid to feel.

The joy of living comes from a heart of thanksgiving.

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## A BASKET OF THANKSGIVINGS

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits Psalm 103:2

No story in the Bible more movingly pictures human ingratitude than this one about the ten lepers. In desperation they had cried out to Jesus for healing. The Lord had cured them, but only one returned to render praise for his deliverance. It often happens that when a person gets what he wants he never re-members to say, "Thank you!"

Some years ago a certain radio personality had a program called "Job Center of the Air" which helped 2500 people find employment. He reported that only ten of that large number took time to thank him.

A man, remembering a school teacher who had been very helpful to him when a child, sent her a letter expressing his gratitude. She was now in her eighties and living alone. Upon receiving his communication, she wrote him, "I can't tell you how much your letter meant to me. You will be interested to know that I taught school for 50 years, and yours is the first note of appreciation I have ever received. It came on a blue, cold morning, and it filled me with cheer."

It disturbs us to realize that we are so ungrateful to our fellow-men, but the base ingratitude to God, exhibited by so many, is even more distressing. An old legend tells of two angels named "Prayer" and "Thanksgiving" whom God sent to earth—each with a basket. The container which carried the prayers to Heaven was large, for it held many requests. However, the basket for the notes of thanksgiving was small, since only three expressions of gratitude were sent to Heaven by the hundreds who had been blessed.

Today, as we are reminded of our selfishness and sinful in-gratitude, let us fill a large basket with "thanksgivings." Then tomorrow, and the days that follow, let us echo the words of the Psalmist: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

Many people act as if the day is ThanksHAVING—instead of ThanksGIVING! —Ralph Mueller

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**History of Thanksgiving Day** - Thanksgiving Day in the United States is an annual day of thanks for the blessings of the past year, observed on the fourth Thursday in November in each of the states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. It is a historical, national, and religious holiday that began with the Pilgrims. After the survival of their first colony through the bitter winter, and the gathering of the harvest, Gov. William Bradford of Plymouth Colony issued a thanksgiving proclamation in the autumn of 1621. This first thanksgiving lasted three days, during which the Pilgrims feasted on wild turkey and venison with their Indian guests.

Days of thanksgiving were celebrated sporadically until, on Nov. 26, 1789, President Washington issued a proclamation of a nationwide day of thanksgiving. He made it clear that the day should be one of prayer and giving thanks to God. It was to be celebrated by all religious denominations, a circumstance that helped to promote a spirit of common heritage.

Credit for establishing this day as a national holiday is usually given to Sarah J. Hale, editor and founder of the Ladies' Magazine (from 1828) in Boston. Her editorials in the magazine and letters to President Lincoln urging the formal establishment of a national holiday of thanksgiving resulted in Lincoln's proclamation in 1863, designating the last Thursday in November as the day. Succeeding presidents annually followed his example, except for President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who in 1939 proclaimed Thanksgiving Day a week earlier—on the fourth but not the last Thursday—to encourage holiday shopping. In 1941, Congress adopted a joint resolution setting the date on the fourth Thursday.

A traditional Thanksgiving dinner takes place yearly at the White House and in almost every American home. Roast turkey and pumpkin pie are among the symbols of this festival. An ancient harvest symbol, the cornucopia, or "horn of plenty," has also been attached to Thanksgiving. Schools and businesses close for this day of family reunion and national, rather than individual, giving of thanks.

In Canada a legal Thanksgiving Day is observed, usually on the second Monday in October. - Jeff Carroll

Who Gets The Thanks?

Read: 1 Chronicles 29:1-20

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Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. . --1 Chronicles 29:12

According to USA Today, a Costa Mesa, California, resident found a small package on her doorstep that contained a car key and a note that read, "This is a gift for you because I love you." It also included a Scripture verse and was signed, "An angel of the Lord." In her driveway was a late-model car—just what she needed to replace her old unreliable one.

The woman was so grateful that she hung a poster on her garage that read, "Thank You, God." A neighbor child asked, "Did God just drop the car from heaven?" Her answer wasn't reported, but certainly she didn't believe that the car had fallen from the sky. She merely wanted to convey her thanks to her anonymous friend who might pass by. But her sign was also making an important statement: All good gifts ultimately come from God.

David recognized this truth as he and his people celebrated the enormous offering that had been given for the construction of the temple. They could have slapped one another on the back and exchanged mutual praise for the other's generosity. But they didn't.

David showed his wisdom and maturity as Israel's leader by thanking the Lord for all blessings. He knew that when a gift comes from human hands, it's the Lord who deserves the praise. --M R De Haan II

We learned to say our "thank you"  
When we were young and small;  
But do we thank our Father,  
Whose gifts are best of all? --Hess

Let's give our loving thanks for our Lord's lavish gifts

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**First Proclamation After Plymouth** - Governor Bradford of Massachusetts made this first Thanksgiving Proclamation three years after the Pilgrims settled at Plymouth:

"Inasmuch as the great Father has given us this year an abundant harvest of Indian corn, wheat, peas, beans, squashes, and garden vegetables, and has made the forests to abound with game and the sea with fish and clams, and inasmuch as He has protected us from the ravages of the savages, has spared us from pestilence and disease, has granted us freedom to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience.

Now I, your magistrate, do proclaim that all ye Pilgrims, with your wives and ye little ones, do gather at ye meeting house, on ye hill, between the hours of 9 and 12 in the day time, on Thursday, November 29th, of the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred and twenty three and the third year since ye Pilgrims landed on ye Pilgrim Rock, there to listen to ye pastor and render thanksgiving to ye Almighty God for all His blessings.- Jeff Carroll

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**Ingratitude** - In the early days of Carthage, if a general was defeated, he was generally cruelly and unjustly treated by his own people, and sometimes condemned to banishment. In one engagement the leader Malchus besieged a city and compelled it to surrender, but was content to put to death only ten of his chief opponents. Not long after the very men he spared plotted against him, brought him to trial, and condemned him to death. - Bible Illustrations – Practical Bible Illustrations From Yesterday and Today.

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**The Attitude of Gratitude** - The late Cleon Lyles told of an experience that happened many years ago when he was holding a gospel meeting in a south Arkansas community. He drove out in the country to visit an elderly man. He found the man's tin-roofed shack. In the porch he could see through the window that the man was just finishing his meager meal of beans and salt pork. At that point the man bowed his head and prayed, "I thank Thee, Lawd, I have dined sufficient." A couple of powerful lessons jump out of this story. First, that man was happy. Though I never met the gentleman, I am certain, based on his prayer, that his life was one of joy and peace. Thankfulness produces joy as surely as day follows night. It's been my observation that grateful people are giving people and giving people are happy people. Gratitude is a powerful attitude that beautifully colors all of life. Secondly, gratitude is not based on the quantity of one's wealth. With a heart of gratitude a meal of beans and salt pork can become a royal feast. Blessings often follow gratitude rather than the reverse order. A person who is not thankful for his or her one hundred dollars most likely would not be thankful for ten million dollars. For the attitude of gratitude is a condition of heart. —Jim Howard

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**Elementary** - Are you impressed by seventy-five cent words? It's the day after Thanksgiving and your wife has gone off to the mall to second-mortgage the homestead. You've got the day off, but the turkey looks unappetizing, the football games are over, so you've discovered this book. After reading a bit of this material you may be unimpressed with its content, which consists mostly of two bit words conveying pedestrian concepts and simple theology. You are not at all like simple-minded Winnie-the-Pooh who said, "I am a bear of very little brain, and long words bother me." After all, you are well educated. You see yourself in the same class as William F. Buckley. Broadcaster Michael Guido once attributed the success of his ministry to: "I keep my message on the level of a third grade student." And the communicator God chose to write much of the New Testament, the Apostle Paul, said this, "*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power*" (1 Cor. 1:17 niv). Sometimes less is more. - Reflections

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An Ungrateful Grumbler

Read: Psalm 103:1-5,22

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. . --Psalm 103:2

Many years ago a magazine related the story of a young man by the name of Ben who had a habit of grumbling. He complained about the weather, found fault with his family and friends, and allowed the smallest things to upset him.

Then one day he read this rhyme: "When you have truly thanked the Lord for every blessing sent, then you'll have very little time to murmur or lament." He realized that his spirit of discontent had made him overlook the gifts God was constantly showering on him.

Ben determined that with God's help he would rid himself of this habit. So whenever he became irritated or began to complain, he would stop and thank God for the many good things he was enjoying. It worked! By centering his attention on praising rather than pouting, he found it much easier to avoid a grouchy mood.

As Christians, we have so much for which to praise the Lord. Thankfulness and an attitude of gratitude ought to be characteristic of every believer (Ps. 34:1; Eph. 5:20).

All of life takes on a different hue when we spend our time counting our blessings rather than airing our complaints. Let's be grateful!  
--HGB

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

Blessings hemmed with praise won't unravel.

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**Light My Fire** - Do you still have an inner fire burning deep inside of you? There was something different about Arlington Cemetery on November 26, 1963. The Washington, D.C. burial ground was poignantly illuminated by the "eternal flame" of President John Kennedy's grave. The past three days had been surreal for most Americans. No matter what side of the political aisle you sat on, the unbelievability of this assassination attached itself to you. A solemn funeral procession, a composed yet grief-stricken wife, and a saluting three-year-old brought tears to the hardest of human exteriors. And finally, the "eternal flame" would remind us always—of a "difficult day to forget" in November of '63. Obviously, this "eternal flame" must be regularly fueled to continue burning. And at some point, in the temporary scenario for this planet, it will be extinguished forever. Unlike that flame, if you personally know the eternal God, you can say with the Psalmist: *"You, O Lord, keep my lamp burning"* (Psalm 18:28). God cannot only fuel your inner fire during this life, but also insure that it will burn brightly throughout eternity. Praise God! - Reflections

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#### Getting Around to God

One Thanksgiving season a family was seated around their table, looking at the annual holiday bird. From the oldest to the youngest, they were to express their praise. When they came to the 5-year-old in the family, he began by looking at the turkey and expressing his thanks to the turkey, saying although he had not tasted it he knew it would be good. After that rather novel expression of thanksgiving, he began with a more predictable line of credits, thanking his mother for cooking the turkey and his father for buying the turkey. But then he went beyond that. He joined together a whole hidden multitude of benefactors, linking them with cause and effect.

He said, "I thank you for the checker at the grocery store who checked out the turkey. I thank you for the grocery store people who put it on the shelf. I thank you for the farmer who made it fat. I thank you for the man who made the feed. I thank you for those who brought the turkey to the store."

Using his Columbo-like little mind, he traced the turkey all the way from its origin to his plate. And then at the end he solemnly said "Did I leave anybody out?"

His 2-year-old brother, embarrassed by all those proceedings, said, "God."

Solemnly and without being flustered at all, the 5-year-old said, "I was about to get to him."

Well, isn't that the question about which we ought to think at Thanksgiving time? Are we really going to get to him this Thanksgiving? —Joel Gregory,

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I will give You thanks with all my heart; I will sing Your praise. Psalm 138:1

A cholera epidemic swept through Asia following World War I, but experts noticed that it did not penetrate China. The reason? The cholera germ cannot survive boiling water, and the Chinese drink tea almost exclusively.

When the epidemic threatened to wrack the Philippines, doctors ordered people to boil their water. But the cholera continued. Investigating, the doctors found that the population had misunderstood their instructions. Every day Filipinos would boil some water and take two or three teaspoons like medicine, then drink their ordinary water as usual!

That's the way we sometimes think of thanksgiving. We take a spoonful every now and then, sometimes at meals or annually on Thanksgiving Day. But a thankful spirit isn't a matter of spoonfuls; it's a constant state of mind.

Remember the story of the ten lepers Jesus healed? Afterward only one returned to thank Him. I have a theory the one leper had a life-orientation toward thanksgiving; and had you seen him the day before his healing, you would have found a thankful person. He

would have told you, "Well, it's true I have this disease, but praise God anyway. Let me tell you about all these blessings...." Having a mind-set of thanksgiving already, it was only natural for him to thank Christ for healing him.

The other nine were grouches before they were healed and unthankful afterward.

One in ten! Are the same proportions true today? Ninety percent of us negative? Let's give thanks with all our hearts, not by the spoonful. - My All in All - Robert Morgan

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**Shallow Water Gratitude** - Too many of us are low-voiced and shallow-streamed in our gratitude. We are like the boy who had been swimming in a tiny pond, and who was taken for the first time to the ocean. His little bathing-suit was put on him, and he was asked to wade in. But he looked aghast at the vast blue expanse, and shrank back. "Why don't you take a dip?" urged his mother. "Because," he said with a great deal of dignity, "I don't think this was made for little boys; it was made for big ships." We have either got to get into deeper water with our expressions of gratitude or else admit that we don't know how to swim. - Bible Illustrations – Heartwarming Bible Illustrations.

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## A LOST ART

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, ...and be thankful. --Colossians 3:15

The apostle Paul had never been to the church in Colosse, but he had heard all about it from Epaphras. He knew it was a church under attack by false teachers, so he prayed fervently for this congregation (Col 1:9-14; 2:4-7).

Among his requests, Paul asked that they would give joyful thanks to the Father because He had rescued them, moving them from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of His dear Son (Col 1:12-13). We too need to be thankful for what Christ has done for us.

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.

Let's take time often to recall how God has rescued us from eternal death and has given us eternal life through His Son. Let's make certain that we never allow thanking the Father to become a lost art. -- David C. Egner

Give me a spirit of thankfulness, Lord,  
For numberless blessings given;  
Blessings that daily come to me  
Like the dewdrops falling from heaven.  
--Dawe

With practice, anyone can master the art of thankfulness.

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**The Thanksgiving Cure** - Thanksgiving season ought to be a great time for curing people of a certain disease of which I have read. The disease is called amnesia. This disease is a comparatively rare affliction—fortunately so. Its main feature is forgetfulness. There are cases on record in which people have forgotten their own names, the date of their births, their family relations; in a word, cases in which memory had become a complete blank and the past was utterly blotted out. Facts have been published concerning a minister's son who disappeared from an army training camp, was hunted for as a deserter, and later turned up as an unnamed man on one of the transports sent back from a military hospital. He had found the longing to be at the front too strong to resist, had apparently re-enlisted under another name, was sent to the firing line, was wounded in the head and when consciousness was restored, he had lost all memory of the past. His name was found to be an assumed one and he was unable to tell who he was or where he came from. His former life had become a complete blank and, when his parents recognized him as their long lost son he did not give the first sign of recognition and knew none of his former friends or acquaintances. Such is amnesia. Physically it is, fortunately, a rare disease, but spiritually it is not rare. Not in vain does the psalmist call upon his soul, "*And forget not all His benefits.*" Kipling has, as the refrain of his immortal "Recessional," the words, "Lest we forget, lest we forget." Ingratitude is nothing but a form of spiritual amnesia. It stands for a voluntary or involuntary blotting out of the memory of the past. The mind is no longer sensitive to past benefits bestowed. It is as if these things had never been. And thus ingratitude becomes a spiritual menace. God's own people are very apt to suffer from this disease and we forget past mercies in the face of present emergencies, as if they had never been. - Bible Illustrations – Heartwarming Bible Illustrations.

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**Savor the Morsel** - Are you so blessed that small gifts are inconsequential to you? Well, it's another fourth Thursday in November. How many does that make for you? Today if you asked the person on the street what one word comes to mind when Thanksgiving Day is mentioned, you would probably hear words like: football, turkey, sales, holiday, and fall. Like most holidays, the initial reason for the celebration has been brushed aside or totally forgotten. The problem is that most of us have more than we need. We have overlooked our need to be grateful for everything both great and small. Think of a time in your life when a single letter or gift was very precious to you. Can you remember a happier, less-well-off time in your life when a single morsel of food seemed like an entire smorgasbord? An ancient prophet asked the question: "*Who despises the day of small things?*" (Zech. 4:10 niv). If the answer is "you," apply this inspiration from your gracious Creator: "*Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus*" (1 Thess. 5:18 niv). Pray this Thanksgiving Day for a continuous and all-encompassing thankful spirit. Remember: No blessing is too "small" not to merit a "big" thanks to God. - Reflections

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**1 in 10** - Is there someone in the course of your life you have forgotten to thank? Thanksgiving is not far away. We can hardly wait for the holiday from work so we can labor at the cornucopia of digestible delights. Yet, folks are still waiting for your thanksgiving to them. Twenty centuries ago, Jesus, the Son of God, was walking through the human experience. One day, close to Jerusalem, he ran across ten lepers. The nationality of the entire group is unclear, but we know one of them was a despised Samaritan. Recognizing Jesus, perhaps only as a healer, they called to him, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" Jesus simply said, "*Go show yourself to the priests.*" Miraculously, on their way, they were totally healed. But sadly, only the Samaritan returned: "*He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him*" (Luke 17:16 niv). Take this week and survey your life. Ask God to bring instances to your mind when you completely forgot to thank some benefactor. Maybe it was a small favor. Perhaps you were just one of a group to which the gift was given. Make an effort to thank at least one person you failed to thank earlier. That one will be surprised, delighted—and thankful. Remember: Why don't you be the "one" in ten who is always grateful. - Reflections

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Blessed be the LORD, Who daily loads us with benefits. PSALM 68:19

A Christian farmer went to the city on business and stopped at a small restaurant for lunch. When his food was served he bowed his head and gave God thanks, just as he always did at home. A young fellow at the next table noticed that the farmer was praying. Thinking that he was a little backward and not in touch with "city ways," he asked loudly to embarrass him, "Say, farmer, does everyone do that out in the country where you live?" The earnest Christian turned to him and replied kindly, "No, son, the pigs don't." In Psalm 68, David reviewed the many ways God had cared for His people Israel. After surveying Jehovah's faithfulness, he exclaimed, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation!" From a heart overflowing with love for the Lord, David gave thanks often. Should we not respond in like manner for every blessing God has so freely given? —P. R. V.

A THANKFUL HEART ENJOYS BLESSINGS TWICE WHEN THEY'RE RECEIVED AND WHEN THEY'RE REMEMBERED.

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**Going Under** - How many times in your life has God rescued you? Last November, Coast Guard rescuers lowered their helicopter basket and pulled in a drowning family of four. A man was taking his family from Norfolk, Virginia to Bermuda. Normally, it was a short and pleasant excursion. But he failed to notice Tropical Storm Gordon descending upon his path. They endured 19 hours of 20-foot waves and 50-mph winds. Their sailboat was tossed like a toy. Many of those hours were spent in prayer for survival. When it was over, did they thank the one who answered their prayers? Surely they thanked the Coast Guard, and most probably the medics who tended to them on shore. But what about their Ultimate Rescuer? The Bible describes such a scene with: "*He rescued them from the grave. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love*" (Ps. 107:20, 21 niv). Are you quick to thank God for the hundreds of times He has rescued you? No matter what method or person became God's instrument for your deliverance, God was the "Conclusive Liberator." Thank Him, right now! Remember: When you forget to thank God, you "miss the boat." -- Reflections

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**Thanksgiving** - The first New England Thanksgiving was celebrated less than a year after the Plymouth colonists had settled in the new land of Massachusetts Bay Colony. The first dreadful winter in the colony had killed nearly half of its members. But new hope emerged in the summer of 1621 when the corn harvest brought rejoicing. Governor William Bradford decreed that a three-day feast be held beginning on December 13, 1621. Thus came about a Thanksgiving Day set aside for the special purpose of prayer as well as celebration. The custom of Thanksgiving Day spread from Plymouth to other new England colonies. During the Revolutionary War, eight special days of thanks were observed for victories and deliverance from perilous times. On November 26, 1789, President George Washington issued a general proclamation for a day of thanks. For many years there was no regular national Thanksgiving Day in the United States until President Lincoln in 1863 proclaimed the last Thursday in November as "A day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father." As one studies early American history it becomes obvious that our early settlers and forefathers expressed their "thanksgiving" and their "gratitude" to God daily rather than once a year. As a nation we need to go back to the pilgrims' fine art of gratitude toward God! - Bible Illustrations – Heartwarming Bible Illustrations.

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In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4:10

We hear it often: "TGIF" (Thank God it's Friday!). Although many people use this phrase carelessly, without reverence for their Creator, they're grateful because Friday marks the end of the workweek.

On Good Friday, millions of Christians around the world are especially thankful because it reminds them of what God accomplished through His Son nearly 2,000 years ago.

But why do we call this day good? Was not this one of the blackest days in history? God's sinless Son, who went about doing good, healing the sick, and bringing hope to sin-ruined lives, was nailed to a shameful cross by self-righteous religious leaders. That's evil at its worst. Where is the good in that?

Paul gave us the answer. On this day centuries ago, God demonstrated "His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Such love is too profound for a genius to fully grasp, yet so simple that a child can accept it.

TGIGF—thank God its Good Friday! —D. J. D.

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**Thankfulness** - There was once a good king in Spain called Alfonso XII. Now it came to the ears of this king that the pages at his court forgot to ask God's blessing on their daily meals, and he determined to rebuke them. He invited them to a banquet which they all attended. The table was spread with every kind of good food, and the boys ate with evident relish; but not one of them remembered to ask God's blessing on the food. During the feast a beggar entered, dirty and ill-clad. He seated himself at the royal table and ate and drank to his heart's content. At first the pages were amazed, and they expected that the king would order him away. But Alfonso said never a word. When the beggar had finished he rose and left without a word of thanks. Then the boys could keep silence no longer, "What a despicably mean fellow!" they cried. But the king silenced them, and in clear, calm tones he said, "Boys, bolder and more audacious than this beggar have you all been. Every day you sit down to a table supplied by the bounty of your Heavenly Father, yet you ask not His blessing nor express to Him your gratitude. - Bible Illustrations – Heartwarming Bible Illustrations.

King Alfonso XIX of Spain learned that the boys who served in his court were forgetting to pray before their meals. So he decided to teach them a lesson. He gave a banquet and invited them to attend. Midway through the dinner a ragged beggar came in, sat down, and began eating ravenously. When he was finished, he went out without saying a word. "That ungrateful wretch ought to be whipped," shouted the boys. "He ate the king's food and never showed gratitude." Quietly the king rose to his feet, and silence fell over the group. "Daily you have taken the rich blessings of life from the hand of your heavenly Father," said the king. "You've enjoyed His sunshine, breathed His air, eaten food He has provided and you have not bothered to say 'thank you' for any of them. You are more ungrateful than that beggar."

Let us never settle for a full stomach and a soul famished by ingratitude. —D. J. De Haan (Our Daily Bread).

HE WHO FORGETS THE LANGUAGE OF GRATITUDE IS NOT LIKELY TO BE ON SPEAKING TERMS WITH GOD.

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## A NOTE OF THANKS

"The things sent from you (were) well pleasing to God."- Philippians 4:18

I was rummaging through some old files the other day when I ran across a big envelope full of treasures -- a collection of thank-you notes from

my students during the last year I taught in high school. They brought back some cherished memories. Reading them reminded me of the importance of letting people know how much they are appreciated. Thank-you notes afford us the opportunity to make permanent our feelings of gratitude for our friends or loved ones.

The apostle Paul sent a thank-you note to the Christians in Philippi. They were the only church that had supported him financially on his missions trip (Phil. 4:15), and he wanted to say thanks. But he did more. He told the people specifically what good they had done by helping him. Through Paul, the people reached out to places they could never visit. They met Paul's necessities (Phil. 4:16). Their gifts bore spiritual fruit (Phil. 4:27). They pleased God (Phil. 4:18). And they received the promise of God's provision for them (Phil. 4:19).

Thank-you notes work both ways. They help the sender to express appreciation, and they help the recipient to know what he has done to assist. It's a great combination.

Does someone you know deserve a note of thanks? -- J. David Branon



Consider what the Lord has done  
Through those who've shown you love;  
Then thank them for their faithful deeds,  
For blessings from above.  
-- Sper

A word of encouragement can make the difference between giving up and going on.

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**Gratitude for Redemption** - A few months before the death of Robert Louis Stevenson, certain Samoan chiefs whom he had befriended while they were under imprisonment for political causes, and whose release he had been instrumental in producing, testified their gratitude by building an important piece of road leading to Mr. Stevenson's Samoan country house, Vailima. At a corner of the road there was erected a notice, prepared by the chiefs and bearing their names, which reads: "The Road of the Loving Heart. Remembering the great love of his highness, Tusitala, and his loving care when we were in prison and sore distressed, we have prepared him an enduring present, this road which we have dug to last forever." - Bible Illustrations – Heartwarming Bible Illustrations.

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**Springs of Ingratitude** - In some parts of Mexico hot springs and cold springs are found side by side—and because of the convenience of this natural phenomenon the women often bring their laundry and boil their clothes in the hot springs and then rinse them in the cold ones. A tourist, who was watching this procedure commented to his Mexican friend and guide: "I imagine that they think old Mother Nature is pretty generous to supply clean hot and cold water here side by side for their free use?" The guide replied, "No señor, there is much grumbling because she supplies no soap."

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**Don't Mention It** - We're not very good at saying "Thank you," are we? We're like a little boy I heard about. On his return from a birthday party, his mother queried, "Bobby, did you thank the lady for the party?" "Well, I was going to. But a girl ahead of me said, 'Thank you,' and the lady told her not to mention it. So I didn't."

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**Ungrateful** - A television plot portrayed two best friends caught in a tense situation. They both loved the same woman. Later the two men were competing against each other in a parachute competition. Both jumped out of the plane at the same time. But when one of the men pulled his ripcord, his chute failed to open. His death seemed sure. However, the other man noticed his predicament, maneuvered into position through freefall, and tied himself to his friend's tangled canopy. Then he opened his own chute. The pair came down together and landed safely. But the real shock came after they had hit the ground. The rescued friend got up and walked away without even thanking the one who saved him.

Now, this story is fictitious, but it sounds a little like the real-life event described in Luke 17. Ten lepers, on their way home from a meeting with Christ, suddenly realized that He had healed them of their dreadful disease. He had saved their lives. But only one, a Samaritan, returned to Jesus to say, "Thank you."

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**A Great Giver** - A king who wished to express his affection for a private soldier of his army gave him a richly jeweled cup, his own cup. The soldier stepping forth to receive the gift exclaimed shamefacedly, "This is too great a gift for me to receive." "It is not too great for me to give," the king replied. God is a great giver. Let us be great in giving thanks. - Bible Illustrations – Heartwarming Bible Illustrations.

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Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples! PSALM 105:1

A little boy said, "Salt is what spoils potatoes when it is left out." Using the same kind of negative definition, we can say, "Gratitude is what spoils life when it is left out." Some of the most grateful people I know have few material possessions and little money in their bank accounts. A character in one of Charles Dickens' stories remarks, "My not knowing at one meal where I shall get the next is a great help to thankfulness." Riches, on the other hand, may be a handicap. A wealthy woman told her doctor that she was frustrated by a restless desire to accumulate more and more things. He replied, "These are the usual symptoms of too much ease in the home and too little gratitude in the heart." No matter what your circumstances, count your blessings. The salt of gratitude helps to make all of life taste better. —H. V. L.

A GOOD ATTITUDE BEGINS WITH GRATITUDE TO GOD.

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**Touching Gratitude** - Wordsworth was once so warmly thanked by an old man for cutting through at one blow a root at which he had been long haggling in vain, that the tears in the old man's eyes drew from the poet these lines:

I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds  
With coldness still returning:  
Alas! the gratitude of men  
Hath oftener left me mourning.

Bible Illustrations – Practical Bible Illustrations From Yesterday and Today.

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**Appreciation for Praise** - When Leech read the complimentary review of his sketches which Thackeray wrote in *The London Times*, he was hugely delighted and exclaimed with enthusiasm "That's like putting 1,000 pounds in my pocket." - Bible Illustrations – Practical Bible Illustrations From Yesterday and Today.

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So bless the travail of gloom-filled hours,  
For joy is oft wrought with pain  
And what if the day be dark? Thank God  
That the sun will shine again!  
—MacLennan

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**Gratitude** - A blind woman who was enabled by a very skillful operation to see, asked to be at once taken to see her minister; she had longed for years to see his face who had led her to see in the Lord Jesus the altogether lovely. - Bible Illustrations – Practical Bible Illustrations From Yesterday and Today.

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### **Moving over to Thanksgiving Street**

An old gentleman got up once in a meeting and said he had lived nearly all his life on Grumble street, but not long ago he had moved over on Thanksgiving street. His face showed it. Paul and Silas in jail at Philippi, when they had received stripes on the back and had their feet in the stocks, still sang praises to God. If some of us were in jail, with our feet in the stocks, I don't think we would sing much. We want a cheerful Christianity. - D L Moody

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### **1 THESSALONIANS 5:18**

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 (Deut. 16:9-12). 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" (1 Thess 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." —D. C. E.

**WE DON'T NEED MORE TO BE THANKFUL FOR, WE NEED TO BE MORE THANKFUL.**

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**The Prayer of Thanksgiving** - Oh, if we could know with what tenderness the eye of the Father in heaven rests upon us to see if we will only cast ourselves upon Him when we are in trouble! Often, long before we call, the help is on the way. August Hermann Francke was a Lutheran Christian in Germany who had learned the art of prevailing prayer. Francke's ministry in life was taking care of orphans. There were times when his trust in God was sorely tested because bills were due and there was no money in sight. One day, his manager had brought a bunch of bills, and Francke had to confess that he had no money to pay them. About to fall on his knees for the purpose of asking God to remember the cause of these needy orphans, he found it necessary first to dictate a message. Then, before he could fall on his knees to ask for the money, a draft for a thousand dollars was delivered. Thus being reminded of the promise, "Before they call I will answer" ([Isa. 65:24](#)), he made his way to his chamber to fall upon his knees to stammer forth his thanks. - Bible Illustrations – Practical Bible Illustrations From Yesterday and Today.

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## Thanksgiving - The Founders

On December 20, 1606, three bold boats sailed down the Thames in London, embarking on a voyage to search for a safe port along the shores of Virginia. Susan Constant, flagship of Sir Christopher Newport's fleet, 110 feet, 7 inches long, was by far the largest vessel. Though she had only nineteen bunks, she carried fifty-four passengers and a crew of seventeen. She was a sturdy ship with the crudest of accommodations. No one had any privacy except the captain. There was no galley. When weather permitted, food was cooked in sand pots on deck.

The second largest ship in this history-making voyage was the Godspeed. It was 69 feet, 2 inches overall, and had cramped sleeping quarters for twelve, yet she listed thirty-nine passengers and a crew of thirteen.

Quite appropriately, one of the boats used by the founders was the Discovery. This small sailing craft displaced about twenty tons of water and measured 50 feet, 2 1/4 inches from stem to stern. The rough "below" was partitioned for four bunks. Yet she brought over twelve passengers and a crew of nine.

It required 128 days for the voyage. The founders arrived at Cape Henry, Virginia, April 26, 1607, at four o'clock in the morning. On this windswept shore, the grateful settlers raised a "large wooden cross" and thanked God for their safe arrival. Jamestown was selected as their site on May 14. These were dark and daring days. The disease-infested swamps, together with Indian warfare, claimed many. Food was scarce. Several hundred colonists came to Virginia in the first six years of her founding, and at one point only sixty persons survived.

On June 7, 1610, it was decided to abandon the settlement. The colonists sailed down the James River once again to challenge the Atlantic. Next morning, Sir Thomas Gates, lieutenant governor of the colony, received word that Lord De la Warr had arrived at Point Comfort with settlers and supplies. Governor Gates returned to the empty fort and, falling on his knees, thanked God the colony had been saved.

The Pilgrims - Dramatic and significant is the story of the Pilgrims. On December 21, 1620, the voyaging Mayflower dropped anchor in Plymouth Bay, with Captain Christopher Jones at her helm. It had been a grueling voyage, taking the one-hundred-twenty-ton-capacity ship sixty-six days to make the perilous crossing. There had been disease, anxiety, and childbirth among the 102 courageous passengers. Furthermore, they arrived on the bleak New England shore during a hard winter which ultimately claimed half of their number. However, when spring came and the captain of the Mayflower offered free passage to anyone desiring to return, not a single person accepted.

The fidelity of the forty-one men, who while still aboard the Mayflower had signed the famous Compact beginning with the words, "In ye name of God Amen," was taking on visible meaning. These chivalrous souls had dedicated themselves to the total causes of freedom. They had come to a wilderness to carve out a better way of life. Faith prompted the voyage; faith sustained the Pilgrims and their religious convictions constrained them to raise their voices in praise. Their hardships, sacrifice, devotion, concept of government, and vigorous religion all remind us of those who sought a country. 1000 Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching.

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In everything give thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

How thankful we can be that we serve a God who is sovereign, loving, all-wise, and all-powerful. Nothing frustrates Him. Nothing stops Him. Nothing escapes His attention. He can take all things—both good and bad—and work them together for the benefit of His children. This truth not only gives us great confidence, joy, and peace, but it also enables us to give thanks "in everything" (1 Thess 5:18).

"God's plan leaves nothing out. All things . . . work together for good—all things, even trials, at which we murmur and complain. The storms which threaten to uproot the trees really root them more firmly and deeply in the soil. The blows that one might think would make the cast-iron brittle really cause it to undergo a sort of [tempering] and increase its strength and tenacity. The enforced rest of sorrow and pain, sickness and disappointment, John Ruskin compares to the rest in which there is no music, but the making of music; not the end of the tune, but a pause in the choral hymn of our lives, during which the Divine Musician beats the time with unvarying count, catching up the next note as if no breaking-place had come between" (A. T. Pierson, *Vital Union with Christ*).

When we love the Lord and pass through deep waters, we can give thanks because we know that all things, even the bad, are working together for our good. —R. W. De Haan

God causes many a tight place to open into the right place.

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**Ungracious Thanksgiving** - At school, one Christmas, the students gave their teacher a Bible. The teacher was an eccentric man, and as he took it, he said, very coldly: "I thank you very much, but—I see it has no concordance in it." Of course, they were all hurt at this show of ingratitude, and his "I thank you" didn't count for much. I am afraid that a good many of us take our blessings from the hand of God in much the same way. We say, "I am thankful," in a perfunctory manner, "but—I could make things better if I had my way." When we repine because of the unalterable environments of our lives, we render our words of praise of no effect. A Christian grumbler is a monstrosity, and if we go from the praise service to find fault with everything about us, from the weather to the minister's sermon, we are guilty of dissembling with our lips. - Bible Illustrations – Practical Bible Illustrations From Yesterday and Today.

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## PSALM 42

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing (Romans 15:13).

The English poet Alexander Pope said, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast, man never is but always to be blessed." As Christians, we know there is only one sure and abiding source of hope, and that is God. If hope originated in ourselves, we would be cast into the depths of despair because life's complex problems have a way of squeezing every last ounce of it from our hearts. But when we trust God, hope abounds by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In his book *Live With Your Emotions*, Hazen G. Werner quotes part of a letter from a woman who had run out of hope. She wrote, "A vile and ugly sin had dogged my way for years. My soul had been eclipsed in darkness. I began to feel I would never be emancipated from its grasp. Then one evening in the midst of my despair, I felt the impulse to say, 'Thank you, God, anyway,' and for a moment it was light. I said to myself, 'That must be the way.' I began to thank Him still more, and the light continued and grew, and for a whole evening I was relieved of my burden."

What that woman seemingly stumbled onto by accident, the psalmist knew from experience. The power of gratitude can lift the weight of the most pressing trial. Turning the gaze of his soul heavenward, he saw God as an inexhaustible source of hope.

When we get discouraged, we can talk to ourselves as David did: "Why are you cast down, O my soul? . . . Hope in God" (Psalm 42:5). No matter how dark the path, thank God for Himself. It will open a window to heaven and let in a ray of hope. —D.J.D.

Hope, like an anchor, is fixed on the unseen.

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**Thank You, Lord, for Pruning Us** - A peach tree stands in our back yard. Unpruned, the tree grew big and leafy. And it was loaded with peaches, although the fruit was disappointingly small and tasteless.

The year he was out of work, Larry went to work on the tree. When I came home from school one day and saw how far back he had pruned it, I stared in shock. "You've killed it," I cried. "Now we won't have any peaches at all."

I was wrong. That spring the pruned branches burst forth with a beautiful blanketing of pink blossoms. Soon little green peaches replaced the blossoms. "Leave them alone," I begged. Larry ignored me and thinned the fruit.

By the end of the summer the branches were so heavily laden they had to be propped up. And the peaches—oh, how large and sweet and juicy they were. There was no denying it: the tree was far better off for the painful cutting it endured under Larry's pruning shears.

No one wants to go through troubles and suffering and pain. But looking back, Larry and I can only say, "Thank you, Lord, for pruning us. Thank you for teaching us to trust you. Thank you for drawing us together as a family and welding us in a way that never happened in happier times. Thank you, that after seeing each other at our worst, we still want to be together."

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## Why Be Thankful? (Psalm 100:4b)

"I do not have to thank anyone for anything I have," an old miser grumbled. "Everything I have I got the hard way—by the sweat of my own brow."

"But who gave you the sweat?" asked his neighbor.

The old miser hung his head in guilty silence. He could not ignore the fact that God had given the "sweat," the strength to work hard and gain material wealth.

Yes, everything that we are or that we possess is because of God's lovingkindness. Therefore, it is good for us all to pause at least once a year and say, "Thank You, God." Actually, everyday should be one of thanksgiving. Why? Because of spiritual and material

blessings.

Mrs. Green thanked Tom, the grocery boy, for delivering a loaf of bread.

"Do not thank me. Thank Grocer Jones," Tom smiled. "He gave me the loaf to deliver."

But when she thanked the grocer, he said, "I get the bread from Baker Brown. He makes it, so he deserves the thanks."

So Mrs. Green thanked the baker. But he told her that Miller Milligan should be given the gratitude. "Without Miller Milligan's flour, I could not make bread," Brown replied.

The miller told her to thank Farmer Foster because he made the flour from Foster's wheat. But the farmer also protested, "Don't thank me; thank God," Foster said. "If He did not give my farm sunshine and rain, I could not grow wheat."

Yes, even a common loaf of bread can be traced back to God, the Giver of "every good and perfect gift" (Josh. 1:17).

- Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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### The Best Thanksgiving Day

As we gather 'round our firesides  
On this new Thanksgiving Day,  
Time would fail to count the blessings  
That have followed all our way;  
Grace sufficient, help and healing,  
Prayer oft answered at our call;  
And the best of all our blessings,  
Christ Himself, our all in all.

While we love to "count the blessings,"  
Grateful for the year that's gone,  
Faith would sweep a wider vision,  
Hope would gaze yet further on.  
For the signals all around us  
Seem with one accord to say,  
"Christ is coming soon to bring us  
Earth's last, best Thanksgiving Day!"

Bible Illustrations - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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### The Art of Thanksgiving

The art of thanksgiving is thanksgiving. It is gratitude in action.  
It is thanking God for the gift of life by living it triumphantly.  
It is thanking God for your talents and abilities by accepting them as obligations to be invested for the common good.  
It is thanking God for all that men and women have done for you by doing things for others.  
It is thanking God for happiness by striving to make others happy.  
It is thanking God for beauty by helping to make the world more beautiful.  
It is thanking God for inspiration by trying to be an inspiration to others.  
It is thanking God for health and strength by the care and respect you show your body.

Bible Illustrations - Bible Illustrations – A Treasury of Bible Illustrations.

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**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!" (2Co 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). ([Unger, M. F., Harrison, R. K., Vos, H. F., Barber, C. J., & Unger, M. F. The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

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#### Some Persons Grumble Because God Placed Thorns among Roses

The sentence which has most influenced my life is, "Some persons grumble because God placed thorns among roses. Why not thank God because He placed roses among thorns?"

I first read it when but a mere lad. Since that day it has occupied a front room in my life, and has given it an optimistic trend.

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#### Excerpts on Thanksgiving from the Puritan's Valley of Vision

O Father, I thank thee that in fullness of grace

thou hast given me to Jesus, to be his sheep,  
jewel, portion;

O Jesus, I thank thee that in fullness of grace

thou hast accepted, espoused, bound me;

O Holy Spirit, I thank thee that in fullness of

grace thou hast  
exhibited Jesus as my salvation,  
implanted faith within me,  
subdued my stubborn heart,  
made me one with him for ever.

I thank Thee for the temporal blessings of this world—the refreshing air, the light of the sun, the food that renews strength, the raiment that clothes, the dwelling that shelters, the sleep that gives rest, the starry canopy of night, the summer breeze, the flowers' sweetness, the music of flowing streams, the happy endearments of family, kindred, friends. Things animate, things inanimate, minister to my comfort. My cup runs over. Suffer me not to be insensible to these daily mercies. Thy hand bestows blessings: Thy power averts evil. I bring my tribute of thanks for spiritual graces, the full warmth of faith, the cheering presence of Thy Spirit, the strength of Thy restraining will, Thy spiking of hell's artillery. Blessed be my sovereign Lord

O my Saviour,

I thank thee from the depths of my being  
for thy wondrous grace and love  
in bearing my sin in thine own body on the tree.

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Blessed be thou, O Father, for contriving this way,  
Eternal thanks to thee, O Lamb of God,  
for opening this way,  
Praise everlasting to thee, O Holy Spirit,  
for applying this way to my heart.

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I thank thee that many of my prayers  
have been refused —  
I have asked amiss and do not have,  
I have prayed from lusts and been rejected,  
I have longed for Egypt and been given a  
wilderness.....

I thank thee for thy wisdom and thy love,

for all the acts of discipline to which I am subject,  
for sometimes putting me into the furnace  
to refine my gold and remove my dross.

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May his shed blood make me  
more thankful for thy mercies,  
more humble under thy correction,  
more zealous in thy service,  
more watchful against temptation,  
more contented in my circumstances,  
more useful to others.

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I thank thee for personal mercies,  
a measure of health, preservation of body,  
comforts of house and home, sufficiency of food  
and clothing,  
continuance of mental powers,  
my family, their mutual help and support,  
the delights of domestic harmony and peace,  
the seats now filled that might have been vacant,  
my country, church, Bible, faith.

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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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Dear Abby,

I have saved verses, bright sayings, and bits of philosophy for many years. I don't know where this came from, but I am hoping someone reading this will know and write in:

The Five Most Important Words: "I am proud of you."

The Four Most Important Words: "What is your opinion?"

The Three Most Important Words: "If you please."

The Two Most Important Words: "Thank you."

The Least Important Word: "I."

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Jessie Donadio, a 36-year-old Boston woman, became the victim of amnesia. For three months she wandered, but during a severe thunderstorm she suddenly remembered who she was and where she was from. A Cleveland, Ohio, police officer said that the storm jolted her memory back.

How often the storms of life bring us back to our senses! God sends them not to destroy us but to help us. Many people can look back and thank God for the storms that brought them back to Him!

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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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**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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**The Transformed Life - Thanksgiving** ... comes from above. It is the gift that we cannot fabricate for ourselves. It is to be received.



It is freely offered and asks to be freely received. That is where the choice is! We can choose to let the stranger [Christ] continue his journey and so remain a stranger. But we can also invite him into our inner lives, let him touch every part of our being and then transform our resentments into gratitude. We don't have to do this. In fact, most people don't. But as often as we make that choice, everything, even the most trivial things, become[s] new. Our little lives become great—part of the mysterious work of God's salvation. Once that happens, nothing is accidental, casual, or futile any more. Even the most insignificant event speaks the language of faith, hope, and above all, love. That's the Eucharistic life, the life in which everything becomes a way of saying "Thank you" to him who joined us on the road.

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#### Guidepost for Every Day Life

Five guideposts have governed my life: To thank God for every adverse event; to hold a bolt of lightning in my hand rather than to speak against a brother; to pay any price in order to be obedient to the Holy Spirit; to administer in love and never to govern in anger; to pay three compliments every day.

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**A Prayer of Thanks** - 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! - Jeff Carroll

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**John Stott** commenting on "**always giving thanks**" in Eph 5:20 writes - The grumbling spirit is not compatible with the Holy Spirit. Grumbling was one of the besetting sins of the people of Israel; they were always 'murmuring' against the Lord and against Moses. But the Spirit-filled believer is full not of complaining, but of thanksgiving. Although the text reads that we are to give thanks always and for everything, we must not press these words literally. For we cannot thank God for absolutely 'everything', including blatant evil...So then the 'everything' for which we are to give thanks to God must be qualified by its context, namely in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father. Our thanksgiving is to be for everything which is consistent with the loving Fatherhood of God and the self-revelation he has given us in Jesus Christ. Once again the doctrine of the Trinity informs and directs our devotion. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we give thanks to God our Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Stott, J. R. W. *God's New Society : The Message of Ephesians*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press)

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**Hat and Coat On** - I love the story of Helen Hayes, who wasn't a cook at all. Finally, after many, many years her family decided that they ought to have Thanksgiving dinner at home. And so she told her husband and son "Now, I've cooked turkey for the first time and I'm gonna bring it to the table. And if it's not good, I don't want anybody to say a word. We'll just quietly get up from the table, and without any negative comments, we'll just go to a restaurant and have a Thanksgiving meal." So she went into the kitchen to get the turkey only to come into the dining room to see her husband and son both sitting at the table with their hat and coat on. - Jeff Carroll

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**Ray Stedman** illustrates "**always giving thanks**" in Eph 5:20 - I remember when I was in the Navy we all took our meals in the mess hall. (If you could see the food trays after the serving men had plopped the food on them you would know why they called it a mess hall.) I recall sitting with a Christian friend across the table from a great, burly quartermaster who was a complete pagan, with one of the foulest mouths I have ever heard; that is not uncommon in the Navy. As we always did, we bowed our heads and gave thanks for the food. It happened that my friend disliked the food and began to complain about it. Suddenly this fellow sitting across the table spoke up and said, "Look, didn't you just give thanks for that? Then eat it and shut up!" This was a word in season. **You cannot give thanks and complain at the same time.** The word to us is, "**in everything give thanks.**" Now why does it say that? Surely it does not mean in everything? But it does mean **in everything**, because of what he has just said here. The will of the Lord is that we be put in difficult situations and have unpleasant circumstances in order that we might have opportunity to manifest the life of Jesus Christ (**Ed: Stedman makes a vitally important point -- The way we manifest the "life of Jesus" is by allowing the Spirit of Jesus to fill us, control and enable us to accomplish supernaturally what is impossible naturally!**). Therefore, do not complain about it. Give thanks, because it will do something to you that nothing else could do. This is what Paul tells us in Second Corinthians, "this light affliction which is but for a moment is working for us a far exceeding eternal weight of glory," {cf, 2Cor 4:17 - see poem below}. Also, "no chastening (discipline) for the present seems joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those that are exercised thereby," {cf, Heb 12:11}. God has purpose in all these things. Therefore, give thanks in all things. ([Ephesians 5:15-20: Watch How You Walk](#))

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One little hour to suffer scorn and losses,  
Eternal years beyond earth's cruel frowns;  
One little hour to carry heavy crosses,  
Eternal years to wear unfading crowns. —Anon.

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**Harry Ironside** commenting on **giving thanks for all things** - "Oh, but," you say, "there are some things I cannot give thanks for, there are some things so hard, so difficult to bear, there are some things that lacerate my very soul." Wait a moment. Have you ever undergone a serious physical operation as a result of which you have been delivered from something that was just wearing out your very life? When you had to undergo it, it seemed very hard, but as you look back upon it, can you not give thanks for the surgeon's knife, can you not give thanks for the very sufferings you had to endure because of the blessed after-result? Very well, Christian, some day, "When we stand with Christ in **glory**, Looking o'er life's finished **story**," we shall see as we cannot now just why all the hard things were permitted, and how God our Father was seeking to set us free from hindrances and from encumbrances, by pruning the branches from which He wished to get fruit for Himself. In that day we will thank Him for all the sorrow as well as for all the joy. In faith let us do it now. (cp 1Co 13:12,13, 2Co 4:16, 17, 18, Lk 6:22,23, cp Ps 119:67,71 Mt 5:10, 11, 12-note Ro 5:3, 4, 5-note Heb 12:5-note, Heb 12:10,11-note James 1:2, 3,4-note, James 1:12-note; Ro 8:18-note, Ro 8:29-note 1Pe 1:6,7-note) Nothing can come to me but what His love allows. "All things work together for good," and so a Spirit-filled believer will be loyal and submissive, not the kind who tosses his head and says, "I am not going to have anybody dominate me; I will do what I think and what I like." That is the old walk of our unconverted days, that is the old nature, not the new. ([Ironside's Notes](#))

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**James Montgomery Boice** wrote "Shakespeare wrote in King Lear, "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!" True! Ingratitude in children wounds and sometimes kills. But how much more unnatural and repugnant is ingratitude in those who have become sons and daughters of the living God (living God = Mt 16:16, 26:63, Acts 14:15, Ro 9:26, 2Co 3:3, 6:16, 1Ti 3:15, 4:10, Heb 3:12, 9:14, 10:31,12:22, Re 7:2). It is so unnatural that a person may wonder if such a one has actually become a Christian in the first place. (Ephesians Commentary)

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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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### **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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**William Gurnall - Prayer and thanksgiving.** Prayer is a means to dispose the heart to praise. When David begins a psalm with prayer — he commonly ends it with praise. That Spirit which leads a soul out of itself to God for supply — will direct it to the same God with His praise. We do not borrow money of one man — and return it to another. If God has been your strength, surely you will make Him your song. The thief comes not to thank a man for what he steals out of his yard. Mercies ill gotten, are commonly as ill spent, because they are not sanctified, and so become fuel to feed lusts.

As a necessary ingredient in all our prayers: Let your requests be made known with *thanksgiving* (Philippians 4:6). This *spice* must be in all our *offerings*. He who prays for a mercy he wants, and is not thankful for mercies received, may seem mindful of himself — but is forgetful of God. God will not put His mercies into a rent purse; and such is an unthankful heart.

Daniel, when in the very shadow of death, the plot being laid to take away his life, prayed three times a day, and gave thanks before his God (Dan. 6:10). To have heard him *pray* in that great strait would not have afforded so much matter for wonder; but to have his *heart in tune* for giving thanks in such a sad hour, was admirable. ([See entire article](#))

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**Thank Him for His prescription!** (Letters of John Newton) - Trials are medicines which our gracious and wise Physician prescribes, because we need them. He proportions the frequency and weight of them--to what our case requires. Let us trust in His skill--and thank Him for His prescription!

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#### **Rest and Give Thanks James Smith, 1860**

This motto was inscribed on a fountain, intended for the accommodation of travelers. Weary, the traveler needs rest. Thirsty, he needs drink. Both are provided and presented to him freely, he may well therefore be directed to give thanks. The fact is, we are not half thankful enough. Perhaps if we were kept in more need — we would be more grateful for what we have. But the Lord daily loads us with his benefits. Most of us have cause to say, "My cup runs over!" The lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places, yes, we have a goodly heritage. What spot is so favored as Old England! What people are so indulged as we are! But I fear we are very ungrateful, and are apt to dwell more on a few trials — than on a thousand mercies. May the Lord, by his Holy Spirit, open a fountain of gratitude in all our hearts. ([click for the entire reading](#))

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#### **GRATITUDE - James Smith, 1859**

Nothing is more graceful or befitting in us, as believers in Jesus Christ, than *gratitude*. Oh, how much we have to be grateful for! Whether we look back at the *past*, or forward to the *future*—what cause for praise. The Lord has dealt well with us, according to his word. If we look *within*, there is God's work, preparing us for glory; or if we look *up* to heaven, there is God's Son, preparing glory for us. *Behind* us is the disgrace, the dunghill, and the horrible pit, from which we have escaped; and *before* us is the honor, the mansion, and the happy home, which we shall soon possess. My heart is moved, my soul heaves with delightful emotions, and no words can express my feelings better than those of David, "Now therefore, O God, we thank you, and praise your glorious name." 1 Chron. 29:13. (See entire article "[Gratitude](#)")

No duty is more urgent than that of returning thanks.

Ambrose

God's giving deserves our thanksgiving.

Anon.

Thanksgiving is the vibration of the soul's heart-strings under the soft touch of God's benevolence.

Anon.

To give thanks sincerely, one must give more than thanks.

Anon.

I give it as my testimony that there is a marvellous therapy in thanksgiving.  
John Blanchard

Thanksgiving is not a natural virtue; it is a fruit of the Spirit, given by him.  
Jerry Bridges

As the Lord loves a cheerful giver, so likewise a cheerful thanksgiver.  
John Boys

A thankful man is worth his weight in gold.  
Thomas Brooks

A thankful heart has a continual feast.  
W. J. Cameron

How worthy it is to remember former benefits when we come to beg for new.  
Stephen Charnock

We should spend as much time in thanking God for his benefits as we do in asking him for them.  
Vincent de Paul

Thankfulness grows best in the seed-bed of conviction, just as some plants must be placed in the soil in the winter if they are to flower in the summer.  
Sinclair Ferguson

The thankfulness of the receiver ought to answer to the benefit of the bestower as the echo answers to the voice.  
Thomas Fuller

Those blessings are sweetest that are won with prayers and worn with thanks.  
Thomas Goodwin

Thanksgiving is an act of self-denial.  
William Gurnall

Joy untouched by thankfulness is always suspect.  
Theodor Haecker

Prayer without thanks-giving is like a bird without wings.  
William Hendriksen

Every stream should lead us to the fountain.  
Matthew Henry

In thanking God, we fasten upon his favours to us; in praising and adoring God, we fasten upon his perfections in himself.  
Matthew Henry

Thanksgiving is good but thanks-living is better.  
Matthew Henry

Every virtue divorced from thankfulness is maimed and limps along the spiritual road.  
John Henry Jowett

Thankfulness is a flower which will never bloom well excepting upon a root of deep humility.  
J. C. Ryle

He enjoys much who is thankful for little.  
William Secker

Our thanks should be as fervent for mercies received, as our petitions sought.  
Charles Simmons

It is sad when there is nothing for which we feel grateful to God, but it is serious when there is something and we fail to show gratitude.  
William Still

Every furrow in the book of Psalms is sown with the seeds of thanksgiving.

Jeremy Taylor

Hearty thanks must be given to God: such as cometh not from the roof of the mouth but the root of the heart.

John Trapp

Thanks must be given and held as still due.

John Trapp

The Christian is suspended between blessings received and blessings hoped for, so he should always give thanks.

M. R. Vincent

Thanking God for whatever he gives us is one sure way of resisting the devil.

Spiros Zodhiates

- From Complete Gathered Gold by John Blanchard

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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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**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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Worthy is Christ of our worship,  
Worthy is He of our praise,  
Magnify Him with thanksgiving,  
Gladly our voices we raise.  
-- Anon.

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**R Kent Hughes** writes that "the fullness of the Spirit does call us to a radical spirit of gratitude. We are to thank God in the midst of difficulties for everything which is consistent with his Fatherhood and his loving Son... The fullness of the Spirit rules out a grumbling, complaining, negative, sour spirit. No one can be Spirit-filled and traffic in these things. In America we, as a people, have so much. Yet we characteristically mourn what we do not have: another's house, car, job, vacation, even family (see word study on envy)! Such thanklessness indicates a life missing the fullness of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, a positive, thankful attitude announces the presence of the Spirit. I once met a pastor in a remote little western town. His church met in rented facilities, and his car had seen better days, as had his house-trailer. But as we walked down Main Street, stepping around the tumbleweeds, he remarked, "I can't believe how good God is to me. I have a wonderful wife, a church to serve, and sunshine 365 days a year!" And then he spent the day helping me set up a week-long outreach. What an argument for the reality of Christ and the life-changing power of the gospel in a world which has forgotten to be thankful (cf. Romans 1:21-note). ([Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ \(Preaching the Word\)](#))

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**J Vernon McGee** commenting on 1Thes 5:18 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. ([Thru the Bible](#))

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**Gift Exchange** - For one who has made thanksgiving the habit of his life, the morning prayer will be, "Lord, what will you give me today to offer back to you?"

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**D Edmond 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 (Ed: Dispensed by the Spirit of God! Corollary = only believers continually filled with/controlled by/empowered by the Holy Spirit can be continually thankful!). It can become a vital reality only when the truth of Ro 8:28-note is experienced (Ed: I would add, only when we truly believe God will be faithful to fulfill Ro 8:28 100%!). 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](#))

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**Michael Green** records the following story from the life of the fourteenth-century German Johann Tauler, which aptly demonstrates something of the attitude Spirit filled disciples of Jesus should manifest...

One day Tauler met a beggar. 'God give you a good day, my friend,' he said.  
The beggar answered, 'I thank God I never had a bad one.'  
Then Tauler said, 'God give you a happy life, my friend.'  
'I thank God', said the beggar, 'that I am never unhappy.'  
In amazement Tauler asked, 'What do you mean?'  
'Well,' said the beggar, 'when it is fine I thank God. When it rains I thank God. When I have plenty I thank God. When I am hungry I thank God. And, since God's will is my will, and whatever pleases him pleases me, why should I say I am unhappy when I am not?'

Tauler looked at the man in astonishment. 'Who are you?' he asked.

'I am a king,' said the beggar.

'Where, then, is your kingdom?' asked Tauler.

The beggar replied quietly, 'In my heart.'

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**Warren Wiersbe** has some excellent advice writing that "When a Christian finds himself in a difficult situation, he should immediately give thanks to the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit, to keep his heart from complaining and fretting. The devil moves in when a Christian starts to complain, but thanksgiving in the Spirit defeats the devil and glorifies the Lord. "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1Th 5:18-note). The word **gratitude** comes from the same root word as **grace** (charis). If we have experienced the grace of God, then we ought to be grateful for what God brings to us. **Thank** and **think** also come from the same root word. If we would **think** more, we would **thank** more (**Ed**: "Amen!"). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)) (Bolding added)

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Some of you won't like what I say this morning, that's OK. I've got a big church and a beautiful wife. Thank God it's not the other way around.

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Bundles of Joy- Barbara, my six-year-old granddaughter, had been praying for a baby brother for months. So, she was overcome with joy when she saw her new twin brothers. That night her prayer was this happy thank-you: "Dear God, thank you for sending me a baby brother. But I thought you would like to know he arrived in two pieces."

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### Origin of Thanksgiving Day

I heard about a little fourth-grader who stood up to give a report concerning the origins of the Thanksgiving holiday. Here's how he began:

The pilgrims came here seeking

freedom of you know what.

When they landed, they gave

thanks to you know who.

Because of them, we can worship

each Sunday, you know where.

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**W. L. Watkinson** writes that...

**The Spirit of Thankfulness** ought to be the temper of our whole life—'giving thanks always for all things'. (1) God merits our thanks, if such an expression may be allowed. Our very being is His wondrous gift. The things which gladden and go to the enrichment and perfecting of life are His gifts. And as He is the supreme giver, so is He the source of all our blessing. (2) God expects our thanks. We cannot believe that the living God is indifferent to the Spirit in which His boons are accepted. Our nature teaches us better. He whom we worship is not the great machinist, chemist, or artist—such a being might be insensible to gratitude; but we give thanks 'to God, even the Father,' and it is impossible to think that love and gratitude have no place in our relation to Him.

**This spirit of thankfulness** is possible only in the grace and power of Jesus Christ. The name of Christ is that general and holy element, as it were, in which everything is to be received, to be enjoined, to be done, and to be suffered. The Spirit of the natural man is the spirit of criticism and depreciation. Dowered with treasures of light and darkness, inheriting a large and wealthy place, the language of discontent is our native speech. Let us see, then, how in the Christian life these infinite repinings are changed into praise.

**(1) The truth and grace of Jesus Christ make thankfulness possible by convincing us of our true position before God.** Ingratitude, in the main, arises out of infinite and inveterate conceit. Satisfied that we are worthy of the greatest of God's gifts, we really appreciate none. Here the truth of the Gospel effects a fundamental change; it convinces us that we are sinners, without merit and rights; and in doing this, gives a new standpoint whence we view the whole field of life.

**(2) Christ makes thankfulness possible through restoring in us the spiritual faculty by which we discern the greatness and sweetness of all things.** Genius shows itself and its transcendence by discerning the grandeur, romance, and joy of all things great or small. The Spirit of Christ creates in us a faculty of spiritual appreciation corresponding to genius in the mental realm.

**(3) Christ makes the habit of thankfulness possible by assuring us that the painful things of life serve equally with the brightest.** The 'all things' must not be limited to agreeable things. 'Forget not all His benefits.' We cannot recall all the treasures of the deep along whose shore we have travelled; but we can keep a few pearly shells which retain the echoes of the vast music of the ocean of the eternal love (W. L. Watkinson, Themes for Hours of Meditation)

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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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**Matthew Henry** - We must continue it throughout the whole course of our lives; and we should give thanks for all things; not only for spiritual blessings enjoyed, and eternal ones expected (for what of the former we have in hand, and for what of the other we have in hope), but for temporal mercies too; not only for our comforts, but also for our sanctified afflictions; not only for what immediately concerns ourselves, but for the instances of God's kindness and favour to others also. It is our duty in every thing to give thanks unto God and the Father, to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father in him, in whose name we are to offer up all our prayers, and praises, and spiritual services, that they may be acceptable to God.

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A wine company advertisement in Newsweek magazine read, "The earth gives us wonderful grapes. The grapes give us wonderful wine. The wine wins us lots of new friends. Thank you, earth."

How easy it is to give credit and thanks to everything or everyone but the real source of all our blessings!- 750 Engaging Illustrations - Craig Larson

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In the Chilean village of Chungungo water is nearly as valuable as precious metal. The region is arid and parched, forcing the village to truck in fresh water over dirt roads from miles away. Until recently the average person could afford a mere four gallons a day (compare that to the average American who uses ninety gallons a day), and buying even that meager amount soaked up 10 percent of household incomes. In Chungungo bathing was a luxury.

But then scientists experimented with an ingenious new system for obtaining water. The 330 residents of Chungungo now drink water—the freshest they have ever tasted—from high above, atop nearby El Tofo mountain. Under the direction of Dr. Robert Schemenauer, a Canadian cloud physicist, workers hung on eucalyptus poles a "wall" of finely woven propylene nets, each the size of eight queen-size bed sheets sown together. Seventy-five such nets sift the clouds that sweep in incessantly from the Pacific Ocean.

A close look at the plastic nets reveals propylene fibers meshed in tiny triangles. Like dew collects on grass, infinitesimally small water particles from fog collect on these fibers. Ten thousand such water particles must coalesce to produce one drop of water the size of a tear. Still, each water net collects forty gallons of water a day. The seventy-five nets on El Tofo sift a total of three thousand gallons daily from the drifting clouds and fog.

Sometimes our lives feel as dry and parched as the rocky soil around Chungungo, where only shrubs and cactus grow. What we need are spiritual water nets. Few things will flood the reservoirs of our soul like giving thanks to God.

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, an 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 hath 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. - 750 Engaging Illustrations - Craig Larson

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And still is ours today

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Mark Tidd of Webster, New York, describes an experience from his college days:

An old man showed up at the back door of the house we were renting. Opening the door a few inches, we saw his eyes were glassy and his furrowed face glistened with silver stubble. He clutched a wicker basket holding a few unappealing vegetables. He bid us good morning and offered his produce for sale. We were uneasy enough that we made a quick purchase to alleviate both our pity and our fear.

To our chagrin, he returned the next week, introducing himself as Mr. Roth, the man who lived in the shack down the road. As our fears subsided, we got close enough to realize it wasn't alcohol but cataracts that marbleized his eyes. On subsequent visits, he would shuffle in, wearing two mismatched right shoes, and pull out a harmonica. With glazed eyes set on a future glory, he'd puff out old gospel tunes between conversations about vegetables and religion.

On one visit, he exclaimed, "The Lord is so good! I came out of my shack this morning and found a bag full of shoes and clothing on my porch."

"That's wonderful, Mr. Roth!" we said. "We're happy for you."

"You know what's even more wonderful?" he asked. "Just yesterday I met some people that could really use them." - 750 Engaging Illustrations - Craig Larson

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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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**Thank God for Those Losses!** - Theodore Cuyler, a 19th-century pastor, told of a young lawyer who was heartbroken by the death of the woman he loved. Despite his grief, he went ahead with his plans and became a powerful preacher of the gospel and a successful soul winner. His great loss increased his effectiveness. Said Cuyler, "The record book of every Christian has some pages in it that were written at the bidding of that severe teacher called disappointment. Tears may have blurred the page at the time, but as we view it in the light of experience we can write beneath it, 'Thank God for those losses!'"

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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!

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[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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**Dwight Pentecost - Thanksgiving** looks back to previous answers to prayer and gives thanks because God has worked in similar situations before. If there is something that is a burden to me today, I can go to God and remind Him that yesterday or last week or last month I was in the same situation, with the same gnawing anxiety, and I asked Him to do something, and He did it; so I thank Him for what He has done. **Confidence for the future is based on what God has done in the past.** If I go into the Word of God

and find that some saint of God had the same burden that I bear today and God met their need, I can thank God that He met the needs of whomever it may be, and now I can expect God to do the same for me. To many people this seems bold. "Of course God worked for Moses, and David, and Paul," they say. "Why shouldn't He? Look who they were." Do you realize that you have just as much claim on God as Moses or David or Paul or any of the saints had? God's promise is to you as it was to them, and what He did for them He will do for you. That is what Paul is trying to share with us. We must take a place of utter dependence, present a specific need, give thanks for fulfillment of similar promises, and then present our requests to God. God's command is, "Do not worry." The solution: "Commit your way to the Lord, trust in the Lord." (Ps 37:5) The means by which we do it: "Prayer and supplication with thanksgiving." ([Pentecost, J. D. The Joy of Living: A study of Philippians. Kregel Publications](#))

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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.

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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.

**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 unblessed sorrow is the saddest thing in life; but perhaps as sad a thing is an unblessed joy. And every joy is unblessed 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 always; 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 Congressmen 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
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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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## NOT LIKE THE MULE

Be ye not like the horse, or like the mule .... Psalm 32:9

A certain man, prominent in society, asked a church dignitary whether it was according to the rules of etiquette to "say grace" at a banquet table. The preacher replied, "I do not know much about etiquette, but I remember seeing on the wall of a farmer's home a picture showing mules and oxen at a crib. They were devouring the fodder and scattering some of it beneath their feet, and over the picture was this inscription:

'Who, without prayer, sits down to eat,  
And, without thanks, then leaves the table,  
Tramples the gift of God with feet,  
And is like mule and ox in stable.'

My wife Margaret tells about an experience in her childhood that made a deep impression on her. One day when she was at a friend's home for dinner and everyone had assembled around the table, someone suggested they should "give thanks." Evidently it wasn't their custom. After a moment of rather awkward silence, the mother of the house blurted out, "We don't have to give thanks. After all, Daddy worked awfully hard to provide this food!" What a tragedy that people who should know better fail to recognize that

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. 1:17).

On the other hand, just going through the motions of "saying grace" at the table can be almost as bad as not praying at all. How easy it is to become mechanical, even in our religious exercises, and to pray just because it is customary or seems to be "the right thing to do." Whenever we bow our heads together, may our expression of thanksgiving always well up from the depths of a grateful heart. Let's not be "like the mule"!

Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices, 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.—Martin Rinkhart

Giving thanks is a course from which we never graduate.

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"GLOOMY CAESAR AND HAPPY JESUS"

This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise. Isaiah 43:21

Says Dr. Paul S. Rees, "Some time ago I saw an intriguing title, 'Gloomy Caesar and Happy Jesus.' In the short article that followed, the author contrasted what we know of Tiberius Caesar, who ruled Rome in A.D. 30, with what we know of the Savior. Of Tiberius with all his power, pomp, and possessions, the historian Pliny wrote, 'He is the gloomiest of mankind.' But of Jesus we read that sitting in the shadow of His cross, He 'took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them' (Luke 22:19), and when the holy supper was over, they sang a 'hymn' and 'went out' (Mark 14:26)." Dr. Rees concludes by saying, "You and I are not to be dispensers of Caesar's gloom, but rather transmitters of Jesus' joy!"

The Lord formed us for His glory and with the express purpose that we should show forth His praise (Ps. 50:23). There are enough "gloomy Caesars" around today. What the world needs, therefore, is thankful Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit and Jesus' love. They should be so content with what has been granted them in grace that they will stimulate sad and weary men to seek Him who is the "fount of every blessing."

There is enough in this life to complain about if we are inclined to be sour and discontent. As followers of Him who has admonished us to "rejoice evermore" and "in everything give thanks," we should be happy ambassadors of Heaven, spreading the sunshine of His love to a dark and needy world. To attract others to your Savior, stop being a "gloomy Caesar" and start radiating "the joy of the Lord"!

When all -Thy mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys,  
Transported with the view, I'm lost  
In wonder, love, and praise! —Watts

Praise being the fairest blossom of the soul, we should ever cultivate the "bloom of thanksgiving"!

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ON my way to work one day I saw this bumper sticker: "Did you thank a green plant today?" Plants, of course, are essential to life. By the process of photosynthesis they produce oxygen. They also supply us with food, fuel, drugs, and many building and industrial materials. Was the bumper sticker suggesting that because we depend so heavily on plants we should thank them for our blessings? Perhaps so.

The marvels of creation should indeed fill our hearts with gratitude, but always to the Creator. In My Utmost for His Highest, Oswald Chambers wrote, "Learn to associate ideas worthy of God with all that happens in nature—the sunrises and the sunsets, the sun and the stars, the changing seasons—and your imagination will never be at the mercy of your impulses but will always be at the service of God." Service, after all, is a practical form of thanksgiving to the One who brought everything into existence and who sustains the world by His power.

Be aware of creation. The sun reminds us of God's warmth and love. Space speaks of His infiniteness. The sunrise and sunset reveal His beauty and splendor. This awareness should keep us praising the One who not only gives us physical life, but who also imparts eternal life through faith in Christ. That bumper sticker should read: "Did you thank God today?"—DJD

Thank You, Lord, for the knowledge that You created all things and that by Your power all things remain in existence. May this truth inspire my gratitude and ignite my desire to offer myself in service to You.

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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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Thankfulness to God

I. THE DUTY HERE ENJOINED is to give thanks. Thankfulness is such a sense of favours received from, and of obligations due to, a benefactor, as disposes us to make suitable acknowledgments and returns.

1. A grateful heart retains the impression of past mercies.
2. Gratitude sees a real value in God's blessings.
3. A sense of our unworthiness enters into the essence of thankfulness.
4. In the exercise of gratitude, we shall improve God's favours to the ends for which He bestows them.
5. Gratitude delights to express its feelings and sentiments.

6. Thankfulness studies a suitable return. God's goodness should lead us to repentance. When favour is shown us we should learn righteousness. His mercies should persuade us to present ourselves to Him as living sacrifices. His disinterested love should awaken in us sentiments of benevolence to our fellow men.

II. CONSIDER THE CHARACTER OF THAT BEING TO WHOM OUR THANKS MUST BE SUPREMEY DIRECTED. God is the Father of the universe, and the Giver of all the blessings which we receive, and which we behold around us.

1. To Him we must give thanks; for all things are His.
2. To Him we must give thanks; for He has given us all things richly to enjoy.
3. To Him we must give thanks; for His goodness is free and disinterested.

III. We are required to give thanks always to God.

1. We ought to be always in a habit of thankfulness, and in a readiness for actual thanksgiving, whenever providence calls us to it.
2. Thanksgiving should find a place in all our stated addresses to God.
3. All special favours should be distinctly observed and acknowledged.
4. We should be thankful in every condition.
5. We should never cease to give thanks.

IV. THE MATTERS FOR WHICH WE ARE TO GIVE THANKS. "All things." Personal blessings. The benefits of civil society, Religious privileges.

V. THE MEDIUM OF OUR ACCESS TO GOD IN THIS DUTY--"The name of Jesus Christ." God putteth no trust in His saints; the heavens are not clean in His sight. How much less man that is a worm; man that is a sinner! We are not worthy to speak to Him in praise for the benefits which we receive; much less to ask of Him farther benefits; least of all to receive the benefits which we ask. We are, therefore, directed not only to pray but also to give thanks in the name of Christ. (J. Lathrop, D. D.)

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Ephesians 5:20 - Verse 20 says that those full of the Spirit are "always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." These words have sometimes been misappropriated through a literalness which has done great harm to many sincere believers. The words "for everything" have been interpreted without reference to God's character or to the absurdity of thanking God for something he loathes. The false reasoning is that "for everything" means literally for everything regardless of how evil it is. Some have taken what they call "unconditional praise" to be the key to spiritual victory. Thus they praise God for a spouse's adultery, a daughter's rape, a child's death, a church split, a fellow Christian's fall. True, we praise God for being God in the midst of these miseries and for being able to bring good out of evil. "But," as John Stott says, "that is praising God for being God; it is not praising him for evil.... God abominates evil, and we cannot praise or thank him for what he abominates."

Nevertheless, the fullness of the Spirit does call us to a radical spirit of gratitude. We are to thank God in the midst of difficulties for everything which is consistent with his Fatherhood and his loving Son.

One day Tauler, the fourteenth-century mystic and preacher, met a beggar. "God give you a good day, my friend," he said. The beggar answered, "I thank God I never had a bad one." Tauler said, "God give you a happy life, my friend." "I thank God," said the beggar, "I am never unhappy." Tauler, in amazement, responded, "What do you mean?" "Well," said the beggar, "when it is fine, I thank God; when it rains, I thank God; when I have plenty, I thank God; when I am hungry I thank God ... why should I say I am unhappy when I am not?"

The fullness of the Spirit rules out a grumbling, complaining, negative, sour spirit. No one can be Spirit-filled and traffic in these things. In America we, as a people, have so much. Yet we characteristically mourn what we do not have: another's house, car, job, vacation, even family! Such thanklessness indicates a life missing the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, a positive, thankful attitude announces the presence of the Spirit. I once met a pastor in a remote little western town. His church met in rented facilities, and his car had seen better days, as had his house-trailer. But as we walked down Main Street, stepping around the tumbleweeds, he remarked, "I can't believe how good God is to me. I have a wonderful wife, a church to serve, and sunshine 365 days a year!" And then he spent the day helping me set up a week-long outreach. What an argument for the reality of Christ and the life-changing power of the gospel in a world which has forgotten to be thankful (cf. Romans 1:21). - Preaching the Word - Ephesians

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## The duty and scope of thanksgiving

There are few duties which the Bible enjoins in terms of so large a requirement as the duty of thanksgiving. It must be true that to the Christian the causes of gladness always exceed the causes of melancholy; so that, in times the darkest and most adverse, the Christian has greater cause to rejoice than to be downcast. In the first place we will examine our text as enjoining thanksgiving as a duty; in the second place, as proposing "all things," with no exception whatsoever, as the subject matter of that thanksgiving; "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I. Now it cannot be necessary that we should speak at any great length on THE DUTY OF GIVING TEASES. It would seem to have been determined in every age and by every nation, that ingratitude is so execrable a thing, that to be unmindful of benefits demonstrates an unworthiness which disqualifies for all the intercourses of life. Yet, strange it is, we have the spectacle forced on us continually, of men who would blush to be thought ungrateful to their fellows, utterly unconscious that they owe anything to God, and untouched by the numberless benefits which they are every moment receiving at His hands. How are we to account for this? There are two reasons, we think, to be given for this phenomenon. The first is the practical atheism which loses sight of a first cause, and idolizes second causes; the second is the repugnance there is in our nature to the owning itself dependent.

II. But the duty of thanksgiving will be yet more evident when we have to consider, in the second place, THE SUBJECT MATTER OF GRATITUDE. We are directed by the apostle to give "thanks for all things"; and it were easy, and it would be a pleasing occupation, to bring before you a long and wide catalogue of benefits, and to summon you as each separate act of beneficence passed under review, to "praise the Lord, for His mercy endureth forever."

1. Look then, first, at the small or everyday mercies. If you would apply a microscope to an everyday mercy, you might discover in it, as in the atom or the water drop, the very same demonstration of the presence of the Omnipotent, as in the surprising interposition which has marked some great crisis in your life; and, therefore, you are only giving a melancholy proof of the feebleness and short-sightedness of your nature, if you so cast up benefits under the divisions of great and small, that you think any too trivial to claim the tribute of your thanksgiving. It costs God (if we may use such an expression) the same labour to build the world as the atom, the same love to give the moment's breath and the empire's dowry; and if it be for the love shown that we render thanks, we owe, therefore, the same amount, whether the instance of mercy be rare and almost unexampled, or whether it be of daily and even momentary occurrence. Besides, it ought to be evident, on the least reflection, that the common and daily benefits of life are usually the greatest and the most valuable in their nature. Oh! it is a cold and withered heart that lies in that man's breast, who requires a miracle before he will recognize a mercy. Life is one perpetual miracle. But you must, I hope, be satisfied that you owe God thanks for what men count small and everyday mercies; do you not also owe Him thanks for what they count evils? If not, then you would be grateful for food, but not for medicine. But the "giving thanks always for all things," this it is which we would specially press upon your attention. We have comparatively no fears of your not giving thanks on great occasions and for signal mercies; what we fear is a habit of overlooking little and everyday things, and not feeling them to be cause for praise. And then, observe the concluding words of our text, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our prayers and our praises must alike be presented in and through this all-prevailing name. In themselves they are weak and polluted, but purified with His merits they rise with acceptance and find favour with God. The Lord Jesus Christ is our argument in asking, and should be our incentive in thanking. (H. Melvill, B. D.)

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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

2 Chronicles 29:31

Sometime ago, I awoke in a dismal mood, worried about finances, health concerns, and family issues. But my morning Bible reading included a verse about thanksgiving, and I realized God expected me to change my attitude and to offer Him the sacrifice of praise. In my notebook, I listed eight things for which I could be thankful that day, and the effect on my disposition was immediate. Later I looked up every reference to thanksgiving in the Bible and was amazed at how many there are. Here's a sampling:

Be thankful.... Coarse and foolish talking are not suitable, but rather giving thanks.... Whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.... Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.... Give thanks to the Lord of lords. His love is eternal.... Give thanks to the Lord for His faithful love and His wonderful works for the human race.

Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and praise His name.

As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him... overflowing with thankfulness. Never stop giving thanks.

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! - Robert Morgan in My All in All

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## Luke 17:17 (NIV)

As we gear up for Thanksgiving, it's important to realize that our Lord's question in Luke 17:17 implies an expectation. He had healed ten lepers, and He expected all ten to thank Him with joyful gratitude; but only one did so. That one, I think, had cultivated a different attitude in all of life. While the other nine had cursed their fate, he had worked hard to keep a good attitude. While the other nine had complained about their sickness, he had found ways of looking on the bright side. While the other nine had awakened each morning in a bad mood, he had noticed the sunrise. While the others had gobbled down whatever food they found, he had bowed his head in thanksgiving. While the other nine wore expressions of scorn and cynicism, he had learned to smile. Thanking Jesus was more natural to him than to the others that day, for he had worked on it. Thanksgiving is never an isolated act; it's the expression of a cultivated attitude. - Robert Morgan in *My All in All*

Ten met the Master in a field,  
Called to Him, agonized, were healed.  
Nine hastened on their various ways.  
One only, cleansed, returned to praise,  
Lettered in gratitude and grace,  
Meeting His Master face to face.

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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 got 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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Don't grumble because you don't get what you want; be grateful that you don't get what you deserve.  
Anon.

The greatest sufferer that lives in this world of redeeming love, and who has the offer of heaven before him, has cause of gratitude.  
Albert Barnes

How strange that the Lord must plead with those whom he has saved from the pit to show gratitude to him!  
Donald Grey Barnhouse

God is never more properly thanked for his goodness than by our godliness.  
John Blanchard

It is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.  
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Christians should have a gratitude attitude.  
Stuart Briscoe

He who receives a benefit should never forget it; he who bestows should never remember it.  
Pierre Charron

The finest test of character is seen in the amount and the power of gratitude we have.  
Milo H. Gates

There is nothing quite so stirring in the matter of moving us to pray as being thankful to God for what he has done for us and with us.  
E. F. Hallock

So much has been given to me, I have no time to ponder over that which has been denied.  
Helen Keller

Gratitude is the most exquisite form of courtesy.  
Jacques Maritain

Gratitude to God makes even a temporal blessing a taste of heaven.



William Romaine

Gratitude is a duty which ought to be paid, but which none have a right to expect.

Jean Jacques Rousseau

A grateful mind is both a great and happy mind.

William Secker

Where God becomes a donor man becomes a debtor.

William Secker

The essence of Christian ethics is gratitude.

R. C. Sproul

It ought to be as habitual to us to thank as to ask.

C. H. Spurgeon

The man who forgets to be grateful has fallen asleep in life.

Robert Louis Stevenson

He who forgets the language of gratitude can never be on speaking terms with happiness.

C. Neil Strait

God is pleased with gratitude; he gets so little of it.

William Tiptaft

From John Blanchard - Complete Gathered Gold

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1 Thessalonians 5:18 - 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).

**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 peruse 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

**1 Thessalonians 5:17 Commentary <> 1 Thessalonians 5:19 Commentary**