

Topical Message

Thankfulness

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

1. Intro

- 1.1 There's a phrase, often attributed to millennials, that says "You do you"
 - 1.1.1 3 songs in 2020 named this, at least 1 more since
 - 1.1.2 This is how most people from my generation approach decision-making
 - 1.1.2.1 You do whatever will make you happiest!
 - 1.1.2.2 You do whatever will benefit you the most!
 - 1.1.2.3 You do whatever you need to take care of yourself!
 - 1.1.3 I hate this phrase - it makes me cringe
- 1.2 My generation might have a phrase for it, but it's human nature
- 1.3 In the Bible, it's often phrased as humans considering something "in their own eyes"

Proverbs 12:15

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.

Proverbs 3:7

Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil.

- 1.3.1 The first verse is calling you a fool if you think you can do it alone
 - 1.3.1.1 Bonus points, whose counsel do you think it's suggesting you heed?
- 1.3.2 What if you consider yourself wise? You can make your own decisions then right?
 - 1.3.2.1 The second verse implies that you will descend into evil
- 1.4 In 2 Timothy, Paul tells Timothy what will come. Men living apart from God:

2 Timothy 3:1-7

¹But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ⁶For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- 1.4.1 I do not want to be counted among these people, but how can I be sure that the decisions I make will lead me to God?
 - 1.4.1.1 That verse in Proverbs said "fear the Lord and depart from evil."
- 1.5 The key here is to understand that God has given us a will
 - 1.5.1 We can exercise our own will, decide to do what we want
 - 1.5.1.1 You can do you, He'll allow it
 - 1.5.2 He has also made clear in His Word that He has a will and a purpose
 - 1.5.2.1 He invites us into that will, to participate in His good work to grow His kingdom

1.5.3 Where can we go to receive God's counsel, to know His good will?

1.5.3.1 Paul continues in this passage

2 Timothy 3:16

¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1.5.3.2 Paul is telling us that God's counsel comes from God's Word

1.5.3.3 Through reading His Word, and through prayer asking God to impart understanding

1.6 Let's go to God now in prayer, as we prepare to open His Word, and ask that He would reveal Himself to us

2. Message

2.1 Please open your Bibles to **1 Thessalonians 5**

2.2 I've introduced this as a pretty broad topic, God's will for your life

2.2.1 Obviously, there are so many facets to this, we could go on forever

2.2.1.1 And we should go on forever! That's why we meet multiple times a week

2.2.1.2 That's why you should read your Bible everyday

2.2.2 Not only is the topic so broad, but sometimes it can be really hard to feel confident in a decision

2.2.2.1 Yes, you've sought God's counsel, maybe you've gone to a pastor or an elder, but the decision just still doesn't seem clear

2.2.2.2 There are some things however, that God is absolutely clear on - no question

- I want to hone in on one of these aspects today

2.3 Let's go back to Paul's words to Timothy

2 Timothy 3:1-2

¹But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy...

2.3.1 When reading this verse, it's easy to think that Paul is just listing a bunch of wicked things - and he is

2.3.1.1 But until I was preparing for this message, I didn't realize that there is something in here that Paul cares especially about

2.3.2 As Thanksgiving is coming up this week, I thought talking about thankfulness would be timely

2.3.2.1 I also thought, naively, that - Hey, this will be pretty straightforward and easy

2.3.2.2 So I started the word study... hoo-boy

- Isn't there something about those who exalt themselves being humbled?

- 2.4 Thankfulness - do you know what God's will is for you on this topic?
 - 2.4.1 You might feel like you know the answer, and it's probably the right answer
 - 2.4.1.1 You can also point straight to it in God's Word

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

- 2.4.2 Thankfulness is one of those topics that God is clear on.
- 2.4.3 As followers of Christ, we are told that God's will for us is to be thankful
 - 2.4.3.1 We get to choose to be in God's will
 - 2.4.3.2 If you seek His counsel in this, it isn't hard to find
 - 2.4.3.3 His will for you, His will for me, is to be thankful in all things
- 2.4.4 One of the things that always amazes me about God's Word is that even the most "straight-forward" topics have immense depth
 - 2.4.4.1 I want to echo Paul's sentiment

Romans 11:33

³³Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

- 2.4.5 As God has taught me in studying this subject, and as I wish to share with you today, thankfulness in the Bible is deep and rich
- 2.5 I've brought Paul up already several times, and there is good reason
 - 2.5.1 Paul went through some stuff
 - 2.5.1.1 He attests to this in 2 Corinthians when false teachers challenge his authority
 - 2.5.2 Even through all his hardships, as we will soon see, he continues to give thanks
 - 2.5.3 Don't misunderstand what God is trying to tell us
 - 2.5.3.1 This isn't a guilt trip
 - If you are a believer, your guilty soul has been purchased and redeemed by the blood of Christ
 - This is about sanctification - an opportunity to be more like Christ
 - An opportunity to lay aside your will, to participate in His
 - 2.5.3.2 It's not that you have to be thankful because Paul went through so much more
 - It isn't eat your food because of starving children in Africa
 - 2.5.3.3 God cares about you and your circumstances
 - He cares deeply about your trials and tribulations
 - If you grieve in your spirit, he is the Comforter
 - We are told to cast all our cares on Him, and He will give us peace
 - 2.5.3.4 I think the purpose here is to see that regardless of your circumstances, there is the command to give thanks
- 2.6 As I studied this topic, to try to understand God's command and how I can be obedient in it, I started with a word-study
 - 2.6.1 I want to share with you what God has shown me on the topic of thankfulness

2.7 Let's start by looking again at our verse in 1 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

2.7.1 Right off the bat I learned something I never knew

2.7.1.1 The greek word that is translated "give thanks" is the word *eucharisteo*

2.7.1.2 This is where the name Eucharist comes from

- What we call communion, or the Lord's Supper
- It is the greek word for thanks

2.7.1.3 In the gospels, this is the word Jesus used when He thanked God for providing

- Both instances of feeding the gathered crowd

Matthew 15:36

³⁶And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude.

John 6:11

¹¹And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them [b]to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.

- Also at the passover meal

Mark 14:23

²³Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

2.7.2 One thing I love about a word study, is seeing how, in other languages, words can carry so much weight

2.7.3 This word, *eucharisteo*, is a derivative of another word, *charizomai*, that means to grant favor, or pardon, to rescue

2.7.3.1 Biblical thankfulness is about something specific

- The world will say that you get to decide when to be thankful, and if the situation doesn't benefit you, there's no reason for gratitude
- Thankfulness in the Bible is being fully aware that God rescued you

2.7.4 It's even deeper than that though! *Charizomai* comes from *charis* meaning graciousness

2.7.4.1 It's recognizing God's favor, and accepting His gift of grace

2.7.5 And finally, *charis* comes from *chairo*

2.7.5.1 *Chairo* means to be full of cheer, to rejoice

2.7.6 Thankfulness is being aware of God's provision, both physical and spiritual, recognizing and accepting His pardon, and rejoicing in your salvation

2.7.6.1 It's so much more than saying "thanks" or being kind and generous because you feel good about something or someone

2.7.6.2 It's seeing your position before a holy God and knowing there was nothing you could do to bridge the gap, but He did it for you

- "Oh the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary"

2.7.7 The verse comes full circle!

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

2.7.7.1 The word for rejoice in v16 is *chairo*, the root of the word give thanks in v18

2.7.7.2 Rejoicing and giving thanks come hand-in-hand

2.7.7.3 How can you express your thanks to God if not in rejoicing? And if you are rejoicing in God, it's because you recognize that there is something to be thankful for!

2.7.7.4 Notice that there is no need to talk about your current circumstances

- You've been pulled up from the grave! You are born again! You are a citizen in the unshakeable, everlasting kingdom of God!

2.8 I did a word study for thankfulness in the Old Testament too

2.8.1 Don't forget, although the New Testament was written in Greek, all the writers were Jewish and would have cultural understandings from their own language about thankfulness

2.8.2 So what understanding does the Hebrew provide?

2.8.2.1 Let's use a Psalm as a starting point

Psalm 100

A Psalm of Thanksgiving.

¹Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! ²Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. ³Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. ⁴Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. ⁵For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.

2.8.3 Let's look at the word translated "thanksgiving" - this is the Hebrew word *todah*

2.8.3.1 This word is often translated as praise as well

2.8.3.2 Literally, it means extension of the hands, as in a choir of worshippers

- As a worship leader, this caught me by surprise, more on that in a second

2.8.3.3 In the greek, thanks was attached to the idea of rejoicing

2.8.3.4 I find it fascinating that the Hebrew combines the ideas of thanks and praise together

- We sometimes think of thanks as a feeling or attitude and praise as an action, but I think they are one in the same
- Biblical thankfulness will result in praising God, if not, then are you really thankful?

2.8.4 *Todah* has its roots in the word *yadah*

2.8.4.1 This is the word used in the phrase that is repeated throughout the old testament "give thanks to the Lord for He is good"

2.8.4.2 *Yadah* - *yad* meaning an open hand

2.8.4.3 This means literally to use the hand, especially to revere or worship with extended hands

- Again, this idea of lifting hands to worship
 - I found this so interesting - the idea of raising your hands during worship can be summed up in one word in Hebrew
 - We do it during worship, and I've heard people debate the appropriateness of this in corporate worship
 - Kind of seals the deal for me
- 2.8.4.4 This word is used many times, and is translated thanks and praise, same as ***todah***
- 2.8.4.5 Again we are seeing the connection between the feeling of thankfulness, and the action of responding in praise - they can't be separated
- 2.8.5 Both of these words carry another meaning
- 2.8.5.1 They are also translated as confess or confession
- 2.8.5.2 This usage is found in Leviticus, Numbers, 1 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah
- 2.8.5.3 In these instances, the people of Israel are confessing their sin, or the sin of their ancestors, or the sin of the nation as a whole, to God
- 2.8.5.4 The idea of confession is that you are agreeing with God that you have sinned
- 2.8.5.5 So thankfulness in Hebrew comes with the awareness of your sin
- Thankfulness and praise have their root in the understanding of your sin and its consequences
- 2.9 Okay, last part of the word study - back to the Greek
- 2.9.1 There's another set of words translated thank or thanks
- 2.9.2 The first is ***exomologeō***

Matthew 11:25

²⁵At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.

- 2.9.2.1 It means to fully agree - Jesus is in perfect agreement with God
- 2.9.2.2 This word is translated thank, is also translated confess
- It is used in this way when people come to John the Baptist to confess their sins and be baptized

Mark 1:5

⁵Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

- 2.9.2.3 This word carries with it an agreement with God about sin
- Jesus agrees with God's judgment on the "wise and prudent", choosing instead to reveal himself to "babes"
 - The people coming to John are agreeing that they need to be washed clean

2.9.3 The root word to this is *homologeō*

Hebrews 13:15

¹⁵**Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.**

2.9.3.1 This word means to acknowledge, confess

2.9.3.2 Again, here it is translated to give thanks, but it is translated confess in

1 John 1:9

⁹**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.**

2.9.3.3 Our confession is paired with giving thanks

2.9.3.4 We have an assurance that our sins are forgiven - there is no hesitation

- We don't confess, then wait to hear back from God about it
- He's already given us His Word and His Son
- When you confess, be thankful because you know you are forgiven

2.9.4 I wanted to come back to this second set of Greek words to see how the thread of thankfulness is unbroken throughout the Bible

2.9.4.1 Thankfulness is acknowledging our sin, confessing that God is holy in His judgment, yet gracious and merciful

2.9.4.2 He has become our rescue, to pardon us from judgment

2.9.4.3 Our response, the proof of our thankfulness, is praise and rejoicing

2.10 I can't help but repeat Paul's words - **Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!**

2.11 So now that we have a better understanding of what it means to give thanks, we should think on what this looks like practically

2.11.1 We saw that in the last days, people will be unthankful

2.11.1.1 And I mentioned how I think there's more to this than meets the eye

2.11.2 We also read in Proverbs that contempt for the Lord and His counsel is the path to evil

2.11.3 During the course of this word study, I found in the writings of Paul a constant reminder of thankfulness

2.11.3.1 And it isn't passive or by accident, he is intent in reminding every reader that this Biblical idea of thankfulness is a commandment for believers

2.12 Open to **Ephesians 5**

2.12.1 Therefore - wherefore

2.12.1.1 In chapter 4, Paul is encouraging unity in the church

- To be patient and humble with one another
- That there is one Body and one Lord
- There are different spiritual gifts, but one purpose
- That through Christ you are a new man, walking in holiness
- And to put aside anger and disputes as these grieve the Spirit

2.12.2 **Ephesians 5:1-2**

2.12.2.1 Therefore, imitate God by walking in unity and love

2.12.2.2 He continues with a warning then

- 2.12.3 **Ephesians 5:3-4a**
- 2.12.3.1 Paul lists characteristics of the flesh, things to avoid
- 2.12.4 **Ephesians 5:4b**
- 2.12.4.1 He then suggests that to ensure you are not tempted by these behaviors, rather giving of thanks - *eucharistia*
- Remembering that God has made you new, you don't have to give way to the sinful nature
 - Be thankful and rejoice instead
- 2.12.4.2 And by beginning in a state of thankfulness, we can engage in the things of God
- 2.12.5 Jumping down to verse 15 **Ephesians 5:15-17**
- 2.12.5.1 Paul is telling us we can know what the will of God is
- 2.12.6 **Ephesians 5:18-20**
- 2.12.6.1 To be in the Spirit, in fellowship, giving thanks!
- 2.12.7 After Paul encourages us in this way, he says we should submit to one another, then moves to discussing relationships
- 2.12.7.1 How should husbands and wives relate to one another, children and parents, masters and slaves? Read co-workers maybe?
- 2.12.7.2 Our relationships with one another are directly affected to the depth of our understanding of Christ's sacrifice and what it means for us, and our response to it
- 2.12.7.3 If I am thankful to God, aware of my sin nature, choosing rather to give thanks and rejoice
- My heart and spirit will be ready to participate in His good work
 - In the work of marriage, parenting, and relationships with co-workers
- 2.12.7.4 If I refuse to be humble and refuse to acknowledge God's truth, these relationships don't work
- 2.13 Turn to **Colossians 3**
- 2.13.1 Here, we are going to see a similar theme
- 2.13.1.1 The chapter starts by reminding the reader that you have been raised with Christ, and to set your mind on things above
- 2.13.2 Starting in **Colossians 3:5-9a**
- 2.13.2.1 Again, Paul tells us what behaviors to avoid, things that Christians should not be partakers of
- 2.13.3 **Colossians 3:9b-15**
- 2.13.3.1 Instead, act in these ways, ways that prove you are followers of Christ
- 2.13.3.2 It culminates in giving thanks!
- How do you put on kindness, humility, patience, and love?
 - Start with thankfulness! Knowing from where you were saved, and respond in praise and rejoicing!

2.13.4 **Colossians 3:16-17**

2.13.4.1 If you being in thankfulness, God's truth and His Word will find fertile soil in your heart

2.13.4.2 Let these words that we've read dwell in you, meditate on them, and ask God to help you

2.13.4.3 And in anything that you do, do it in the name of Christ, giving thanks!

- Let all your actions begin in thankfulness

2.13.5 After this encouragement, Paul again talks about your relationships

2.13.5.1 I think Paul is communicating that it is vital that Christian relationships should be steeped in thankfulness and rejoicing

3. Closing

3.1 Let's turn to **1 Timothy 6**

3.2 In closing, I want to consider the ramifications of disobedience of the commandment to always give thanks

3.3 In this chapter, Paul is going to speak about discontentment

3.3.1 Discontentment can only exist in the absence of thankfulness, they are a sort of opposite

3.3.2 **1 Timothy 6:3**

3.3.2.1 "Otherwise" - Paul has been telling Timothy how to relate to those within the church - widows, elders, masters

3.3.2.2 He will tell us what ignoring wholesome words and good doctrine will result in

3.3.3 **1 Timothy 6:4-5**

3.3.3.1 Strong language - people who ignore the words of Jesus are proud, knowing nothing, and obsessed with disputes and arguments!

3.3.3.2 He says they are trying to gain something from professing Christ

3.3.4 **1 Timothy 6:6**

3.3.4.1 Professing Christ is great gain! When it is paired with contentment - thankfulness

3.3.5 **1 Timothy 6:7-9**

3.3.5.1 Those who are discontent fall into temptation - snares, many foolish and harmful lusts

3.3.5.2 Destruction and perdition - that is damnation

3.4 We can see the impact of discontentment in the world around us

3.4.1 If you don't begin in thankfulness, knowing that God has pulled you out of the grave, you aren't equipped by His Spirit to participate in His good work

3.4.2 One of the relationships Paul talked about was husband and wife

3.4.2.1 Marriage continues to be a battle field

- 50% of all marriages end in divorce, still
- US is 6th highest divorce rate in the world

3.4.2.2 Not only in divorce rates, but also how culture/politics chooses to view it

- I read a report that divorce rates were falling, and that this year's divorce rates were inflated by delays in filing caused by COVID
- That report failed to also mention that marriage rates have been dropping year over year as well
- You aren't getting divorced if you aren't getting married in the first place

Proverbs 18:22

²²He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord.

- 3.4.2.3 Both divorce and refusal to marry indicate the lack of thankfulness
 - Marriage is a blessed gift from God
 - It is a picture of the oneness of the Trinity
 - It is a relationship that will challenge you, refine you, and bring you into deeper things
- 3.4.2.4 But remaining unthankful has led the discontent to pursue foolish and harmful lusts
 - Of all births in the US, 41% are born to unwed mothers
 - That number increases to 53% for women under 30 - more than half!
- 3.4.2.5 This leads to the next relationship Paul talked about
- 3.4.3 Parents and children
 - 3.4.3.1 A report I read said that 25% of children live without the presence of their biological father
 - 23% of children live with only one parent and no other adult
 - Not only have they been abandoned by their father, no-one is willing to take on the responsibility of raising these children
 - 3.4.3.2 On top of this, we see child abuse
 - During the lockdown due to the COVID pandemic, health authorities including the National Library of Medicine, World Health Organization, and the CDC said that child abuse and neglect increased
 - Some parents, spending more time with their children, learned that they don't even like or love their kids
 - The worst part about this, reporting during all of 2020 was way down, but then these reports came out that abuse and neglect had increased - just nobody outside the home could see it now
 - 3.4.3.3 You can also see this in a trend of "Mommy Wine Culture"
 - Mothers need alcohol at the end of the day because dealing with their kids was so draining

Psalm 127:3

³Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward.

- 3.4.3.4 If you don't begin in thankfulness, with praise and rejoicing in the work of God, you aren't equipped by His Spirit to raise children!
 - If marriage is refining, raising kids is more so
 - There is no better picture of God's love for us than that of a how a parent should love their kids
 - God gave His only Son, the Son gave His very life
 - I would give anything for my kids

3.4.3.5 But, as with marriage where people just stop getting married altogether, we find a culture that has decided it's just better to not have kids

- They are still drawn to the foolish and harmful lusts
- Pregnancy isn't waning - but population is
- You can see the culture's attitude in the most recent election

3.4.4 This discontentment will result in judgment

Romans 1:21-22

²¹...although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools

Romans 1:29-31

²⁹...being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, ³⁰backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful...

3.4.4.1 Unthankfulness leads to all sorts of temptations, to many foolish and harmful lusts

3.4.4.2 We see it prevalent in the world today

3.5 Paul will continue in chapter 6 to tell Timothy, and us, to flee these things

3.5.1 How do we flee this ungodliness?

3.5.1.1 Remember in Ephesians 4, he said "but rather giving thanks"

3.5.2 Pursue Christ and heed the counsel of God - fulfill His will for you

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

3.5.3 It's a choice you make - you must act

3.5.3.1 It doesn't happen by accident - our sinful nature won't allow it

3.5.3.2 But if you are a believer, God has given you His Spirit, to bring life to your mortal body

3.5.3.3 And His Spirit bears witness to the fact that you are adopted as His child, and he invites you to call Him Father

3.5.3.4 And this knowledge that should bring you to continual thanks and endless praise

3.6 Closing prayer