

UNDERSTANDING AND DOING GOD'S WILL
WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?-PT 2
"IN EVERY THING GIVE THANKS"
1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

Introduction

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** in his epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and the Thessalonians!

Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. once said, "*The loveliest flower that blooms in the garden of the heart is the flower of gratitude; and when gratitude dies on the altar of a man's heart, he's well nigh gone.*"

We see that very thing in **Romans 1:21** where Paul wrote of the Gentile world's downward spiral into sin saying "...when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, **neither were thankful**: but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened."

That downward spiral caused **GOD** to give them up to uncleanness, give them up to vile affections, and eventually give them over to a reprobate mind. But, it all started when they refused to glorify **GOD** as **GOD** and **WERE NOT THANKFUL!** Because they were **NOT THANKFUL**, their hearts were darkened! *BTW...We can see this taking place again in our own country!*

Many sins committed today can be traced to a **lack of genuine GRATITUDE in the heart!** (*e.g. COVETOUSNESS is rooted in INGRATITUDE!*)

**I. UNDERSTAND WE ARE NOT THANKFUL BY NATURE!
GRATITUDE is NOT a part of our NATURE!**

Anything you **HAVE TO BE TAUGHT TO DO IS NOT** a part of your **NATURE**; and anything you **DO WITHOUT BEING TAUGHT IS** a part of your **NATURE**.

It is the **NATURE** of a duck to swim.
It is **NOT** the **NATURE** of a cat to swim.

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It is **NOT** the **NATURE** of a baby to swim. However, an infant can be **TAUGHT** to swim, though it is not a part of his **NATURE!** (*e.g. I was taught to swim!*)

Things that come **NATURALLY** to us are a part of our **NATURE!**

A. SINNING IS A PART OF OUR NATURE!

We do not have to be taught to **SIN**, because **SIN comes NATURALLY to our FLESH!** It is a part of our **NATURE** because we are all descendants of **ADAM!** Which means that we have the **ADAMIC NATURE!**

Psalm 51:5—"Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Psalm 58:3—"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

Romans 5:12—"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

Ephesians 2:3 says that we "...were by nature the children of wrath..."

We have to **TEACH** our children how to do **RIGHT**...because how to do **WRONG** comes **NATURAL** to **SINNERS!**

B. WE ARE UNGRATEFUL BY NATURE!

It is the **NATURAL thing for SINNERS to be UNGRATEFUL**, but it is the **UNNATURAL thing for SINNERS to be GRATEFUL!**

No child was ever born with **GRATITUDE** in his heart!
They **ALL** have to be **TAUGHT** to say "**THANK YOU**" and sometimes it takes a lot of repetition to get the lesson over!

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When a child gets a gift of some kind the parent prods them with a "*Now, what do you say?*" And even sometimes when you finally pull the "*Thank you*" out of them it is not genuine!

They just say it because you make them say it and won't be satisfied until they say it. They weren't born with **GRATITUDE!**

You have to coax them over and over and over again until hopefully they finally learn to say it on their own!

Now, some may just say it for its **REWARD**, but it's not a part of our **NATURE** to be **THANKFUL**.

e.g. A soldier in the army was sent to a rest camp after a period of active service. When he returned to his outfit, he wrote a letter to General Patton, thanking him for the splendid care he had received. General Patton wrote back that for 35 years he had sought to give all the comfort and conveniences he could to his men and added that this was the first letter of thanks he had received in all of his years in the army.

That is just a little indication of our **UNGRATEFUL NATURE!**

C. BUT WE WHO ARE SAVED HAVE A NEW NATURE!
1 Peter 1:4 tells us that we are now "*partakers of the divine nature.*"

So, if we are now in **CHRIST** we ought to be **THANKFUL**, because we have **HIS NATURE** and **CHRIST** was **THANKFUL** to **HIS HEAVENLY FATHER!**

But whether we are **THANKFUL** or **NOT** is determined by what **NATURE** we are **WALKING IN!**

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Are we **WALKING IN THE FLESH**—according to our old **ADAMIC NATURE**? Or are we **WALKING IN THE SPIRIT**— according to our new **DIVINE NATURE** that we have by being **IN CHRIST!**

UNDERSTAND WE ARE NOT THANKFUL BY NATURE...
II. UNDERSTAND WE CAN HAVE A THANKFUL HEART!
But a person can never be genuinely **THANKFUL** until they first recognize where the things they possess came from!

We don't **THANK** someone for something unless we know or at least think that person is responsible for our having it! Right?

A man is **NOT THANKFUL** in his heart to **GOD** until he realizes that **EVERYTHING** he has come from **GOD!**

James 1:17—"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."

When we realize that everything we have comes from **GOD**, then we should feel real **GRATITUDE** in our heart! **GOD** wants us to feel that way and **HE IS GLORIFIED** when our heart pours out to express our **THANKSGIVING TO HIM! WE SHOULDN'T TAKE HIS BLESSINGS FOR GRANTED!**

The most wicked, sinful person is the one who thinks he is a self-made individual and fails to recognize that **GOD** is the source of **EVERYTHING** he possesses!

I think that most all of us have had opportunity to see some who are less fortunate than us and see some of the dire circumstances some of them live in. (*e.g. When I was 17 I went to PCZ ...there was an area I saw in Panama that was by far the worst conditions I had ever seen. An area of abject poverty that was mockingly called HOLLYWOOD*)

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We all can see or know of others who are in deep poverty, yet in comparison, **GOD** has blessed each of us with an **ABUNDANCE!**
(*Psalm 103:1-2*)

All the things we enjoy are **BENEFITS** from **GOD!** If we are truly going to be **GRATEFUL** in our hearts, then we must have a thorough understanding of where the things we enjoy come from!

Also, we need to understand that the **LORD** holds a two-fold right of ownership over us as **BELIEVERS:**

- 1) **The LORD Has The Right Of Ownership That Comes From Being Our CREATOR—HE** made each of us and gave us the breath of life! Our very heart beats at **HIS** command!
- 2) **The LORD Has The Right Of Ownership That Comes From Being Our REDEEMER! HE** bought us, purchased us if you will, with **HIS** own blood at **CALVARY!** Our very **SALVATION** is from the **LORD!**

All that we have and all that we are is because of **GOD!**
(*e.g. Story of the man who use to gamble, but he got saved!*)

When I think of where **GOD** has brought me from and where **HE** has put me, I stand amazed!

May we never get to the place where we don't have **GENUINE GRATITUDE** in our hearts to **GOD** as we realize that every good thing that we have comes from **HIM!**

So, we've said ...

WE ARE NOT THANKFUL BY NATURE...

WE CAN HAVE THANKFUL HEART...

OK, that was the easier part of the message...now comes the hard part!

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III. **UNDERSTAND WE ARE TO BE THANKFUL IN EVERY THING!**

Our text in *1 Thessalonians 5:18*—"*In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*"

Listen to *Ephesians 5:20*—"*Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*"

In our minds, we are prone to think, "*That is a tall order!*"

It is easy to **THANK GOD** when you get a new home, it isn't so easy when you lose that home to fire or flood!

It is easy to **THANK GOD** when you get a new car, it isn't so easy when you wreck that car!

It is easy to **THANK GOD** when you get that new job or a raise in salary, it isn't so easy when you lose your job with no other job in sight!

It is easy to **THANK GOD** when you are in good health, but how about when your health breaks or you sustain a life changing injury!

It is easy to **THANK GOD** when we have plenty, but how about when things get tight!

The only way we can **THANK GOD** for "*all things*" or to "*in every thing give thanks*" is to couple the "*in every thing*" of *1 Thessalonians 5:18* and the "*all things*" of *Ephesians 5:20* with the "*all things*" of *Romans 8:28*.

Romans 8:28—"*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*"

If we truly **BELIEVE** *Romans 8:28*, then as a **CHILD OF GOD**, we can **THANK GOD** even in the midst of the **DIFFICULT** things that come our way in life!

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e.g. Matthew Henry, the famous Bible expositor, was once robbed by thieves. He wrote these lines in his diary: *Let me be thankful, first, because I was never robbed before; second, because, 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.*

In reality, there's **ALWAYS** something we can find to **THANK GOD** for in every circumstance! **GOD** expects our **ATTITUDE** to be one of true **THANKSGIVING** in every relationship and circumstance of life.

Every **BELIEVER** must see the need for having an **ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE** because a **SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE** brings **BLESSINGS** with it! It can help to lighten our load! Because a **BAD ATTITUDE** can weigh us down even more!

It is easy to be **GRATEFUL** every day for each new **BLESSING!** But, we should even **THANK** the **LORD** even in our hardships and trials because the **LORD** manifests **HIMSELF** to us as **HE** brings us through even those times and grows us through them to help others!
(2 Corinthians 1:1-7)

GRATITUDE is found best in the hearts that take time to count up past mercies. (The song we sang...**"COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS"**)

Let's remember, **GOD** is at work in this world! **HE** is at work in our lives! **HE** is fulfilling **HIS** promises and working out **HIS** purposes for us who are **HIS** beloved children!

In the **PROVIDENCE** of **GOD**, this **SPIRIT of PRAISE and THANKSGIVING** will enable us to take everything in stride.

THANKSGIVING should be ever springing out from the evidences of **GOD'S GOODNESS** and **GRACE** to us all—because **HE IS ALWAYS FOR US!**

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HELEN KELLER (deaf, blind, and mute at 19 mos.) said, *"So much has been given to me, I have no time to ponder over that which has been denied."*

*WE ARE NOT THANKFUL BY NATURE...
WE CAN HAVE THANKFUL HEART...
WE ARE TO BE THANKFUL IN EVERY THING...*

IV. UNDERSTAND THAT WE CAN ABOUND IN THANKSGIVING!

Because that is what our text is talking about!

A. We Can ABOUND By Realizing Just How Good We Have It!
"I complained about my shoes until I saw a man who had no feet."

1. Realize How Good We Have It In Our Nation!
2. Realize How Good We Have It In Our Church!
3. Realize How Good We Have It In Our Families!
4. Realize How Good We Have It In Our Lives!
(e.g. Going to Grandpa's house and taking a bath in #3 wash tub and using the outhouse and slop jar)

B. We Can ABOUND By Determining To Maintain A Proper Attitude Of Gratitude!

e.g. It is said that in Africa there is a fruit called the "Taste-Berry" that changes taste. For several hours after one eats the Taste-Berry, everything is sweet and delicious, even sour fruit.

AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE is the *Taste-Berry* of the **BELIEVER!** When we maintain an **ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE**, even the bitter things in life can taste sweet because we know that what comes our way is **FOR OUR GOOD** and **FOR GOD'S GLORY!**

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- C. We Can Abound By Living Life According To Our New Nature, Not Our Old!**
1. Quit living life walking in the **FLESH!**
 2. Live your life walking in the **SPIRIT!**
It'll cause you to be **THANKFUL** to your
HEAVENLY FATHER even in the midst of adverse
circumstances!

CONCLUSION

So, are any of us here tonight guilty of the **SIN OF INGRATITUDE**? Well, tonight is the night to confess that **SIN OF UNGRATEFULNESS** and begin realizing all of what we have in the **LORD!**