

INTRODUCTION

In every command and exhortation found in the Scriptures, there is always the divine enablement to carry it out; to obey it; and to personalize it. When writing to the Philippians Paul said, “Work out your own salvation [sanctification] with fear and trembling [i.e., human responsibility]; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” [i.e., divine enablement] (Phil. 2:12b-13; NKJV).

So it is no exception when Paul writes: “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess. 5:18). This is not some sort of “pie-in-the-sky” theology. It is not the Norman Vincent Peale approach through “The Power of Positive Thinking.” Such thanksgiving does not come by burying our heads in the sand and ignoring the reality of the sin and evil in the world, as well as our own personal struggles and adversities in life. In fact, no matter what might happen in life, the believer is to give God thanks. The child of God has every reason to have an attitude of gratitude!

We are the Church of the living God (called out by Him, unto Him, and for Him)
We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace
He has removed our transgressions as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12)
We are fully loved and totally accepted in Jesus Christ
We are complete in Him
We have been born again from above
We are a brand new creation in Christ Jesus
We have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ
We have passed from spiritual death to spiritual life
We have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son
We have been justified by faith and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ
We are children of God
We have been instated as sons of God (adoption)
We are a chosen generation; a royal priesthood; a holy nation; God’s purchased possession
We are the Bride of Christ
We have abundant and eternal life; Christ’s life is our life
We are heirs of God and join-heirs with Christ Jesus
He indwells us by the person and presence of His Holy Spirit
He has deposited into our trust the Scriptures
We have an advocate with the Father: Jesus our attorney (1 Jhn. 2:1)
He has given us a new family (the church)
We have a High Priest who intercedes for us (Heb. 4:15-16)
We have the privilege of prayer & answered prayer
We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us
He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness
He has blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies
We have a living hope (a life of continued expectancy of blessing and joy); and all because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
He endows us with the gifts of the Spirit
We have been given an Ambassadorship (2 Cor. 5:20)
He gives us His love
He gives us His joy
He gives us His peace
His position is our position (We are seated with Christ)
His victory is our victory

He comforts us
He gives us grace for every need
We are recipients of His mercy
He gives each of us a place in the body of Christ
“We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28)
We are already citizens of Heaven
We are promised a brand new, resurrected and glorified body
(no more sickness, no more tears, no sorrow, no pain, and no more death)
And one day, our faith will become sight, when we shall see Jesus!

The heart of each and every believer should overflow with praise, adoration, and thanksgiving to God our heavenly Father and Jesus our Lord and Savior. Then there will be...

THANKS TO GOD FOR HIS CHURCH

The apostle Paul expressed such love for the church when he wrote:

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers. (1 Thess. 1:2)

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy. (Phil. 1:3, 4)

We have reason to express such love...

- When men and women receive and obey the Word of God

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. (1 Thess. 2:13)

- When fellow believers are growing in Christ

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other. (2 Thess. 1:3)

- When believers are growing in love and faith, refreshing other believers

I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgement of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother. (Phm. 4-7)

There is a natural progression here. When as believers, we are truly and genuinely grateful for all that God is and all that He has done...

WE WILL GIVE OURSELVES

Thanks is the attitude; giving is the action. A good example of this is found in the Old Testament Book of 2 Chronicles, Chapter 29. In the preceding chapter we read of the reign of King Ahaz. Although king of Judah, the Scriptures say that “he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made molded images for the Baals” (2 Chron. 28:2). “He burned his children in the fire;” i.e., offered human sacrifices just like the idolatrous nations that surrounded them (2 Chron. 28:3). He even sought military alliance from the king of Assyria (2 Chron. 28:16). Now note the words of verses 22-25:

Now in the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the LORD. This *is that* King Ahaz. For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, saying, “Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.” But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel. So Ahaz gathered the articles of the house of God, cut in pieces the articles of the house of God, shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and made for himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every single city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers.

At the age of twenty-five, Hezekiah his son inherited this mess! Now note what Hezekiah did (2 Chron. 29):

- “*In the first year of his reign*, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them” (2 Chron. 29:3; italics added).
- He brought the priests and Levites together (v. 4). He started with the leadership. Whenever there is reformation and revival it should always begin with the leadership. As a rule, as the leadership goes, so goes the church.
- He said to the Levites, “Now, sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry out the rubbish from the holy place” (v. 5)
- “Then the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD to cleanse it, and brought out all the debris that they found in the temple of the LORD to the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it out and carried it to the Brook Kidron” (v. 16).

Hezekiah ordered a major and thorough house cleaning that took sixteen days! The priests even went “into the inner part of the house of the LORD;” the area into which only they were permitted to go; the area no one else could see.

Now let’s be honest with ourselves. There are times we all have things in the inner sanctuary of our own lives that no one else sees or even knows about, except us and God. In fact, God sees them clearer and knows about them better than we do. Things like: wrong attitudes, misdirected ambitions, improper motives, jealousy, envy, pride, hatred, lust, greed, bitterness, unforgiveness, anger, malice, and covetousness. No matter how these things might manifest themselves externally, it is still a heart issue.

All of this idolatry and immorality going on under the reign of Ahaz was merely symptomatic. There was a deeper and more internal issue: the heart. It’s interesting to note that when Hezekiah began cleaning house he said to the people: “Now it is *in my heart* to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us” (2 Chron. 29:10; italics added).

The point is this: when their hearts were cleansed, the result was genuine worship and thanksgiving. David was right when he said:

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
Or who may stand in His holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart.
(Ps. 24:3, 4a)

Notice the natural and spontaneous response:

- There was singing (2 Chron. 29:25, 26)

And he [Hezekiah] stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus *was* the commandment of the LORD by His prophets. The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.

The temple choir was comprised of 4,000 musicians and singers praising God! The universe gives praise. The angelic host gives praise. Certainly we who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb should give exuberant, enthusiastic, and heartfelt praise and adoration to our God and Father!

Not only will we give ourselves,

WE WILL GIVE OUR SUBSTANCE

Then Hezekiah answered and said, "Now *that* you have consecrated yourselves to the LORD, come near, and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD." So the assembly brought in sacrifices and thank offerings, and as many as were of a willing heart *brought* burnt offerings. (2 Chron. 29:31)

Again: thanks is the attitude; giving is the action. Chapters 29-31 overflow in worship, which includes giving. When the church is spiritual; when there are clean hearts; a proper focus in worshipping God; a genuine attitude of thanksgiving towards God and His church; it will be generous in its giving!

And Azariah the chief priest, from the house of Zadok, answered him [Hezekiah] and said, "Since *the people* began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and have plenty left, for the LORD has blessed His people; and what is left *is* this great abundance." Now Hezekiah commanded *them* to prepare rooms in the house of the LORD, and they prepared them. (2 Chron. 31:10, 11)

Just as the temple became the storehouse of the offerings of the people and would be used to support the ministry of the priests and Levites, as well as other ministries; so the church becomes the primary storehouse as God's people give to support ministries such as missions, evangelism, Christian education, benevolence, music, trustees, and pastoral ministries. The apostle Paul taught this very principle in 1 Corinthians 16:2.

So please remember the order:

- There was cleansing
- They were worshiping
- They were singing
- They were giving
- There was revival!

Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present **went out** to the cities of Judah and broke the *sacred* pillars in pieces, cut down the wooden images, and threw down the high places and the altars—from all Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh—until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned to their own cities, every man to his possession. (2 Chron. 31:1; emphasis added)

There was a ripple effect. Folks began leaving Jerusalem and went out into their own cities and cleaned house! True revival will impact our own families, our own homes, and our own communities! This was a radical change!

- They were witnessing

Hezekiah sent out an invitation to all of Israel to be part of it!

And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the LORD God of Israel. (2 Chron. 30:1)

So they resolved to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover to the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem, since they had not done *it* for a long *time* in the *prescribed* manner. (2 Chron. 30:5)

So the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed at them and mocked them. Nevertheless some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. (2 Chron. 30:10-11; cf. v. 6)

- There was unity!

Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them *singleness of heart* to obey the command of the king and the leaders, at the word of the LORD. (2 Chron. 30:12; italics added)

CONCLUSION

So a thankful heart is the result of a clean, contented, and Spirit-filled heart. Just like the children of Israel, such thanksgiving is the result of removing from our own lives any idols; anything we may value more than God. A truly grateful heart is a giving and generous heart. It is a heart overflowing in praise and adoration of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Such thanksgiving permeates our own homes and families. A truly grateful heart desires to witness its blessings to others. A truly grateful heart is the result of an obedient and submissive heart; resulting in unity.