

BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS
EXHORTATION TO GIVE THANKS
1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

Introduction

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."*

In Romans 1:21-28 we read of the Gentile world apostasy where *"...when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful: but became vain in their imaginations...and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."*

It all started when they refused to glorify God as God and were not thankful! Because they were not thankful, God gave them up.

A lot of sins committed today are a result of a lack of genuine gratitude in the heart!

I. UNDERSTAND THAT 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.
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!

Things that come naturally are a part of your nature!

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A. We Are Sinners By 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! And therefore 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."

Isaiah records in Isaiah 48:8 that even God's people were *"... called a transgressor from the womb."* (Isaiah 48:8)

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!

B. We Are Ungrateful By Nature!

It is the **natural thing to be ungrateful**, but it is the **unnatural thing 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!

A child gets a gift of some kind and a parent prods them with a *"Now, what do you say?"*

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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 repeat it over and over and over again until finally they learn to say it!

Now, some may just say it for its reward, but it's not a part of our nature to be thankful. *(Example)*

A soldier in the third 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!

2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

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!

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But whether we are thankful or not is determined by what nature we are walking in! Are we walking in the flesh—with the old Adamic nature? Or are we walking in the Spirit—with our new Divine nature that we have by being in Christ!

WE ARE NOT THANKFUL BY NATURE...SO...

II. HOW CAN WE HAVE A THANKFUL HEART?

A man can never be genuinely thankful until he recognizes where the things he possesses 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! 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 those who are less fortunate than us and see some of the dire circumstances some of them live in. *(e.g. The area I saw in Panama with abject poverty.)*

We view others who are in deep poverty, yet God has blessed each of us with an abundance! ***(Psalm 103:1-2)***

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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*)

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 God!

III. WHAT SHOULD WE BE THANKFUL FOR?

Look at our text again!

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

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!"

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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 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!

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 that, then as a child of God, we can thank God even for the bad things that come our way in life!

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!

IV. HOW CAN WE ABOUND IN THANKSGIVING?

Because that is what our text is talking about!

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A. 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)

HOW CAN WE ABOUND IN THANKSGIVING?

By Realizing Just How Good We Have It!

B. Thinkfulness Produces Thankfulness!

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. Gratitude is the Taste-Berry of Christianity! When we are truly grateful, even the bitter things in life can taste sweet!

C. By Living Life According To Your New Nature, Not Your 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!

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CONCLUSION

If you are not saved, what is the best way to express your gratitude to such a wonderful Heavenly Father?

The psalmist said, *"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits...?"* Then he answers his own question: *"I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord."*

If you're not saved you need to realize that God has been good to you also in so many ways and yet here you are unsaved! Why don't you take the cup of salvation today? God will help you to do it now!

Dear Christian friend, are you guilty of the sin of ingratitude? Well, tonight is the night to confess your sin of ungratefulness and begin realizing all of what you have in God!