

The Discipline of Giving Thanks

¹⁶ Be joyful always; ¹⁷ pray continually; ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

A Gateway Discipline

An important distinction that hangs on a participle. . .

Give thanks *in*

Not of necessity *for*

A Gateway Discipline

Consider the teaching of Jesus in Luke 17:11-19

¹⁵ One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

¹⁷ Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" ¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

1. Giving thanks is a choice not a gift
2. Giving thanks may require us to adopt a new perspective
 - No longer a victim of the past
 - Looking to the future with expectation

Some necessary observations

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Romans 8: 28 & 31

Some necessary observations

- Consider the example of Jesus:
After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth one of you is going to betray me."

John 13:31

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Matthew 26:26

Some necessary observations

- To be able to give thanks in *all* things we must focus on the character of God.
- To be able to give thanks in *all* things we must trust in the goodness of God's plan for our lives.

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Some necessary observations

- Either focus on that which we don't have
 - Envy and lust are the mortal enemies of gratitude
- Or focus on what we have been given that we did not deserve
- Choosing to live with gratitude opens the door to spiritual blessing

A Significant Choice

- What is the hardest thing for you to give thanks for?
- Is God good?
- Can God be trusted?
- Will you give thanks in all things? Why or why not?

So What