

Gratitude, Part 1

"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (KJV)

Most of us give thanks. Even the worst people occasionally give thanks. And it is not unusual for people to give thanks for terribly bad things, e.g., the death of an enemy or some misfortune befalling a person of whom we are envious. Some of us take for granted the good things that happen to us. We think we have earned them. We think we deserve it. Some people seldom give God any credit at all for the good things they experience.

However, only Christians empowered by the Holy Spirit can give thanks to God in all circumstances. How is that possible? Christians can give thanks to God for all things for two reasons. First, they understand that God is sovereign and in control of every aspect of their lives. Second, Christians understand that God loves them and always has their best eternal interests at heart. "[W]e know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His

purpose."¹ If these two truths are firmly in our hearts, gratitude for God's sovereign goodness will flow naturally. Christians know that we are inheritors of a spectacular eternity because of the finished work of Jesus Christ. Things may be bad now, but the Christian's future is resplendent. No matter how good or bad our current life is, Christians know that heaven will exceed their wildest dreams. Mortal life may offer little, but, like Abraham, Christians are "looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God."² The world and the flesh hate giving God credit for good things and love blaming Him for bad things.

God does not tell us to give thanks *for all things*. He commands us "to give thanks in all circumstances." We don't have to give thanks *for* a tragedy that befalls us or a loved one. That would be cruel. Instead God commands us to give thanks *"in all circumstances,"* knowing that God is fully in control and that He will sovereignly use even tragedy to provide for us and others a glorious future in heaven. For example, the crucifixion is the worst event in human history, and yet our sovereign God uses it to save us and to make us joint heirs with Christ in heaven.

¹ Romans 8:28 (KJV)

² Hebrews 11:10 (ESV)

We must have an attitude of gratitude because our God loves us and is preparing a home for us in heaven to live with Him forever. Do you believe this? Are you a complainer? Would your family and friends describe you as having a thankful heart? If not, why not? Make it a point today to express gratitude to the people in your life (e.g., your spouse, your children, your neighbor, your co-worker).