

A LIFE OF THANKSGIVING

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INTRODUCTION

Philippians 4:4-7 “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Paul is nearing the end of his life, imprisoned, and overflowing with joy through this whole message. He is instructing them throughout to rest in Jesus’ finished work, to grow in love, to serve one another, to not complain, to persevere, and most of all to rejoice. In a world that is rife with offense and entitlement, the beautiful absurdity of worship and gratitude is a powerful tool that keeps our hearts tender towards the Lord, equips us to win the various trials we encounter, and to demonstrate the love of Jesus to a broken world.

I. REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS

Matt 5:1 “Blessed are those who are poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

- A. **Revelation:** Rejoicing in the Lord leads us to gratitude, and rejoicing begins in the two-fold revelation of being poor in spirit.
1. The sober realization that our current state is despairingly impoverished in comparison to the riches of God’s glory.
 - a. “How then, shall we approach him before whom angels bow and archangels veil their faces – Him in whose sight the white radiance of heaven itself is stained with impurity?” – Charles Spurgeon
 2. Realization should be made in the context of the revelation of the knowledge of God. Though we are impoverished, He is a rich, and generous Father (Eph. 1:17-19).
 - a. Not only do I denounce the weakness of my frame, bereft of any ability apart from Him, but I also receive what has been fully and eternally been made available to me – His righteousness, His power, His goodness.
 - (1) Team Hoyt
 - (2) Peter – Luke 5:3-10
- B. **Choice:** Rejoicing is a choice of obedience born out of the worth of Jesus and the reality of His goodness.

1. This is a command, and something we obey, not something that comes naturally or should only be done when we feel like it. Our emotions are real, but they are not always based in reality. Like sun above the clouds, the reality of God's goodness is everlasting, and we must make the effort to rise above to see it.
2. Thanksgiving is like priming the pump to rejoicing. We remember what He has done, and praise Him for it.

II. LET YOUR GENTLE SPIRIT BE MADE KNOWN TO ALL MEN.

Phil. 1:9-10 "Let your love abound still more in more... that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and without offense until the day of Christ."

- A. Offense accuses God and hardens our hearts, but gratitude disables offense. In this season of our world, gratitude is a rare commodity. Paul's exhortation for the Philippians to rejoice and walk in gratitude is directly related to the coming of the Lord Jesus.
 1. It preserves our hearts to grow in intimacy with Him.
 2. It is a demonstration of God's goodness towards the world.

III. BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING

- A. This is a command! Amazing! What undergirds this statement is confidence in God's goodness and His ability to act. Thanksgiving reminds us of what He has done in the past, and enables us to refuse the temptation to fear.

IV. LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD IN THE CONTEXT OF THANKSGIVING

- A. We think of "thanks" as something we do after the fact; however, here, Paul is telling the Philippians to wield the weapon of thanks giving as part of their prayers, as a battle tactic, if you will.
 1. Thanksgiving affects our experience of a Circumstance.

Phil 4:7 "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"
 2. Thanksgiving affects our ability to overcome the circumstance.
 - a. We keep our focus, not on the enemy's activity, but on the Lord's.
 3. Thanksgiving affects the outcome of the circumstance.

- a. We are speaking prophetically to the situation, declaring the faithfulness of God's activity in the past.
- b. We are opening ourselves up to receive wisdom from heaven that will give us tools to win the battle.

James 1:1-5 "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance... But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

CONCLUSION

We are facing an important season in our nation's history, I believe, with a similarly divisive power as that which we saw before the Civil War. Paul exhorts the Philippians to let their love abound in real knowledge and discernment so that they would approve excellent things, and avoid offense. This love is not wanton and lawless, but it is righteous, and fueled by wisdom. Living with a heart of Thanksgiving that helps us avoid offense is the answer to our frustrated world, while the arguments we set up to declare we are right only further divide. Let us once again turn in Thanksgiving to the Lord this season, and let it overflow into generosity toward others, even as Jesus has done for us.