

# Gratitude, A Choice!

Philippians 4:4-13

## Introduction:

As we approach Thanksgiving, it is important to understand that gratitude is the product of understanding grace. Many of us have the opinion that we are to be grateful when we feel like it. If we follow our feelings on this, then we will never be grateful because our hearts are selfish. We need to come to see that gratitude is a choice. Gratitude for the believer should not be based on external circumstances or when the so-called “stars line up.” We must wake up and choose to be thankful. Otherwise, we fall to self-pity, and as I heard a commentator say just a month or so back, he realized that self-pity is the place of personal misery. When we live in our self-pity, we can fall into a deep well of uncertainty and unhappiness because the focus is upon ourselves. We must learn to choose gratitude.

**Growing Gratitude by Dustin Crowe,**  
*The Grumblers Guide to Giving Thanks: Reclaiming the Gifts of a Lost Spiritual Discipline.*

I’m no master gardener, but in my small-scale gardening, I’ve learned about companion planting. Some flowers, vegetables, and herbs grow better together. They don’t just tolerate one another; they encourage one another’s health and fruitfulness. But some plants can’t grow together. One steals nutrients, blocks the sun, or entices pests that hinder the growth of other plants. The same is true in our life. Faith, humility, and thankfulness are companion practices, supporting and sustaining one another. As one increases, so do the others. But unbelief and boasting choke out the tiniest seedlings of thankfulness. Whereas humility and gratitude feed off each other, gratitude and pride cannot coexist in proximity. Either we’ll view ourselves as the source of good things and take the credit, or we’ll acknowledge God behind everything we have and redirect the glory to Him. As our lives center on God, gratitude grows. When self-focus sprouts and spreads, gratefulness withers.

**A.W. Tozer**

“Gratitude is an offering precious in the sight of God, and it is one that the poorest of us can make and be not poorer but richer for having made it.

## Philippian 4:4-13

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup> What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

<sup>10</sup> I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. <sup>11</sup> Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup> I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through him who strengthens me. <sup>1</sup>

### I. Worship reveals Gratitude

- A. A Christian's desire to worship should be constant.
- B. This does not mean that we should sing every hymn or worship chorus all the time, although singing can be involved.
- C. We as believers should live in a God conscientiousness. In other words, keeping God present in our thoughts as we go about our day, singing to Him, or talking to Him.
- D. Paul states, "The Lord is near." With this in mind, it should keep our minds and hearts present with the Lord as He is present with us.
- E. Having a grateful heart can address the anxieties we face.

### C.S. Lewis

In worship, God imparts himself to us.

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Php 4:4–13). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

## **II. Prayer reveals Gratitude**

- A. Prayer reveals gratitude because we choose to speak to the One we are grateful to.
- B. Stopping our schedule to spend time with God shows that we are grateful that He is in our lives and that we have life because of Him.
- C. Prayer says to God that He is a priority in our lives which reveals gratitude.
- D. When we don't pray, our selfishness thrives.

### **E.M. Bounds**

God shapes the world by prayer. The more praying there is in the world the better the world will be, the mightier the forces against evil.

**NOTE:** Coincidences happen when we pray, and they don't when we don't.

## **III. Seeking to Live a Pure Life reveals Gratitude**

- A. The life we seek to live reveals our gratitude, or lack thereof, to God.
- B. When we choose to live a changed life or behavior, we reveal gratitude because of the one who has allowed us to change.
- C. To change, we must change our focus. This is what Paul is addressing when he states, "Whatever is...think on these things."
- D. Our gratitude diminishes if we are not careful in what we think about and focus on.
- E. When we seek purity, we are grateful for the cross and the cost that was paid for our impurity.

### **Thomas Merton**

"To be grateful is to recognize the Love of God in everything."

## IV. Contentment Reveals Gratitude

### Ed Romine

Contentment is profoundly simple but incredibly difficult to practice. In a culture dominated by distractions such as social media, true contentment can seem impossible to achieve. Our joys are often smothered by discontentment and covetousness.

- A. Learning to be ok with what you have and where you are at reveals gratitude.
- B. Notice we have to learn as Paul did. It does not come natural for the sinner.
- C. There is nothing wrong with wanting better for yourself if it is not greed driving the desire.
- D. We must learn to love the little everyday things that we come in contact with, such as what we have and what we experience because it is these things that make our lives what they are.
- E. Whatever we think will make our lives better also comes with its own worries and issues. It doesn't mean it's not worth it but don't take for granted what you have.
- F. Paul's understanding of contentment is in understanding the mystery of life. What does he mean? He means that living in and experiencing content does not really make sense in a fallen world, but it does when we live in Christ.
- G. Then is why he said, "I can do all things through Him who gives me strength."
- H. It is Christ's strength as we go through life that gives us content and gratitude.

### Charles Spurgeon

Rest assured my dear hearers, it is harder to know how to be full than it is to know how to be hungry.

### John 4:13-14

Jesus states, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

## CONCLUSION

### **Blind to Blessings by Warren Wiersbe**

Emerson said that if the stars came out only once a year, everybody would stay up all night to behold them. We have seen the stars so often that we don't bother to look at them anymore. We have grown accustomed to our blessings. The Israelites in the wilderness got accustomed to their blessings, and God had to chasten the people (see Num 11). God had fed the nation with heavenly manna each morning, and yet the people were getting tired of it. "But now our whole being is dried up," they said, "there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" (v. 6).

Nothing but manna! They were experiencing a miracle of God's provision every morning; yet they were no longer excited about it. Nothing but manna!<sup>1</sup>

### **1 Thess. 5:18**

Give thanks in everything, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.