

WHEN YOU CHOOSE TO PRACTICE THANKSGIVING TO GOD Psalms 92:1, Romans 8:28,

Why in the world should we give thanks? After all, aren't there many things in life that don't appear good, and right? People are being abused, innocent lives are being hurt. We live in a world that is skyrocketing in crime, financial collapse, and all types of abuse toward the most innocent of our culture. Then why should we give thank? The truth is, from the very fall of Adam, mankind has been sinful and until the day the Lord concludes this world, mankind on the whole will live a sinful and wicked lifestyle, but be that as it may, that never alters the "life command" of God to our lives to give thanks.

Have you ever stopped to think that "practicing thanksgiving" is not for God's benefit so much as it is our benefit. After all, God remains God, whether we give thanks or choose not to give thanks...God is God. If man lives in sin, or walks with God...God remains God. God's nature will never alter one iota whether you give Him thanks or refuse to give Him thanks...He will remain eternally God.

Yet out of the overflow of God's infinite love for us, He yearns that we practice thanksgiving. Not because everything is easy. Not because everything is enjoyable, but since He is God, He is completely aware of what happens to any man or woman when they practice for a lifestyle "giving thanks". Many in Scripture are wonderful examples of thanksgiving... Joseph in Genesis, David in Psalms and Paul in the epistles.

1. YOU ARE EXPRESSING OBEDIENCE TO THE LIVING GOD. When you are willing to "give thanks" genuinely, truly and purposely from your heart to the Lord God, this one seemingly small expression of "thanksgiving" despite your circumstances is one of the single greatest acts of obedience that our heart can surrender. When you read the Psalms, there is one evident reality about the very heart of David, he lived praising and giving thanks to God. Not because everything that he faced was easy, but because he knew that God deserved all the praise and thanksgiving from His lips, and that there was no other person in his life that could have given him all that he had given him. No one else could have given him the position of king, but God Almighty. No one but God could have spared his life, but the Lord God. No one else could have been with him in battle after battle but the Lord God and giving Him sweet victory and protection all his life. David gave thanks to God, first because it was right, and second it was an outflow

of obedience. When Paul spoke to the saints at Thessalonica, he told them to give thanks in all things. Why? Because nothing could happen to their lives but what was purposed, and planned by the Lord God. Absolutely no one dictates to God or alters His plans.

When you are giving thanks to God...there is one thing that is happening in that moment. First you are obeying the Living, Eternal, Almighty, Holy, All-Power God of all creation. Giving thanks never meant that we can see or understand everything. Giving thanks is that point that you declare as a child of God, that you are going to obey God, when it is dark, when the light seems to be dim in your situation and you can't understand what is going on.

When you give thanks, there is something special that happens in your spirit, and in truth, the Holy Spirit is reminding us that God is in charge of our situations, our lives and our circumstances. Consider this question...what is more importance in your life than obedience to the Living God? Absolutely nothing. God is going to allow situations to come into our lives on purpose to see how seriously we practice "obedience in the hard times". In the life of Joseph, he faced prison, pain, false accusation and lived a life of thanksgiving. How do we know? Because God was able to bless his life. God cannot bless our lives as He desires if our lives are not lives of "thanksgiving"

2. YOU ARE POSITIONING YOUR SPIRIT FOR GOD'S BLESSINGS. How can "giving thanks" position our lives for the blessings of God. Here is how. When you read 1 Thessalonians 5:18, you are not reading a suggestion from God, but rather a command. When God gives you a command and a directive...they are to be obeyed. When you choose to practice obediently, deliberately "thanksgiving" you are obeying God. And God makes this promise to all, "...Whatsoever a man sows, "that" must he also reap." You are living your life, minding your own business, and practicing "thanksgiving" as a lifestyle. God makes it clear through His Word that He will always reward those who obey Him, and the rewards He gives will always be real, deliberate, and often times visible and tangible. Because God has personally staked His nature on blessing those who obey Him. Listen to how God puts it in Deuteronomy 28:1-2, "If you fully obey all these commandments of the Lord your God, the laws I am declaring to you today, God will transform you into the greatest nation in the world. THESE BLESSING SHALL COME UPON YOU.

God was declaring to His people the utter importance of obedience, and what they could expect when they obeyed, and the nature of God CANNOT change. When you choose to give thanks in your situation, He WILL CAUSE wonderful blessings to come into your life. Why? Because

that is the result of obedience.

Here is how it may work out in life. You are giving thanks for your job, though you work hard and are abused and mistreated, but you give thanks. God is seeing your faithfulness, your dedication, and causes you to come to the mind of someone...they call you with a better job...revealing God's goodness. Why? Because you lived and practiced thanksgiving in hard times. God cannot withhold blessings to those who practice "thanksgiving". Why? Because they are choosing to obey even when it is hard, and in "due time", God always reveals His blessings to the obedient. Joseph realized the blessings of God, as he continually served obediently, and thankfully the Lord God...and in due time, God revealed to Joseph the complete purpose of all that he underwent.

3. YOU ARE HUMBLING YOUR SPIRIT BEFORE THE GOD WHO CREATED YOU AND CAN ONLY DO GOOD TO YOU.

Because of the world we live in, and the sinfulness of mankind, we have come to believe that life is about "us". When things don't go our way, it is normal to complain to God. But the truth is, God didn't even have to let us exist. It is by the wonderful, divine hand of God, that we live, move and have our being.

The fact is life is not about us...it is about the Lord God. Life is best enjoyed and most fulfilling when we come to realize that we live for the Lord God. Our main purpose in life is not to "please ourselves" but to love the Lord God with all our heart, mind, and soul. When we "choose" to give thanks, we are humbling ourselves under the Lord God that has a right to command us, lead us, direct us, order us. Because all His orders are good and will never be to harm us in any way. When we are willing to "give thanks" in essence we are saying, "Lord, you command us to and we bow before Your commands." We can't understand all that happens in life, but we bow before the God who knows all, and understands all. The very fact that we choose not to give thanks is a direct violation against our Lord and our God. It is God that created us, and gives us breath after breath, and He can never do for us or with us one thing that violates His holy goodness, and His holy love for us.

However, to refuse to "give thanks" is a sign of haughtiness on our part. In essence, we are declaring, "God I know you tell us to give thanks, but I will not do it." To that person that refuse to give thanks, unforgiveness, anger, hostility, and all manner of things happen to their soul. Why? Because they refuse to humble themselves before the Living, Loving God, by "giving thanks".

4. YOU ARE REORIENTING YOUR SPIRIT TO ALL MIGHTY AND ALL POWERFUL GOD. When we choose to live a life of "thanksgiving" we are being reoriented to the very fact that there is One who governs our lives every millisecond, and nothing can come to our lives but by His wonderful hand. Paul put it this way, in *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.* Paul had the most comprehensive mindset of God, probably of anyone in his day, and for our day as well, for that matter. Paul, no matter what he faced, knew that God was orchestrating "all things" because He is an infinite, eternal God.

Nothing that happens to us can come to us apart from God's hand. Regardless of what you face. Sadly, however, there are many who believe that they are "self made", that their lives belong to themselves. If God is not in control of every second of our lives, then there could be a "second" that we didn't have to give thanks. But that is not the case. To the person who "gives thanks", he is reoriented to the fact that there is an All-powerful God, that governs every detail of our lives, and rewards us accordingly. Sadly, however, many believers live their lives without giving thanks, and at the end of life they will think that their life was theirs, when they will stand before the Son of God and see how they abused their life through selfish living.

5. YOU ARE PROTECTING YOUR SPIRIT FROM BITTERNESS, AND ALL NEGATIVITY. Bitterness and negativity are so much a part of the fabric of the world and culture that we live in, to the point that book after book has been written about "Overcoming Bitterness" and "Dealing with Negative Feelings". Yet, when you read the life of the apostle Paul, or the life of King David, or the life of servant Joseph, you find men that are not in need of a "how to manual" but rather are the very demonstration of love and kindness and God's grace. God taught to these three men, and to many others alike that "thanksgiving" carries with it protection from hostile and negative feelings.

The truth is, you can't "give thanks" and at the same time have a bitter and angered spirit. Thanksgiving and bitterness are mutually exclusive...where one is...the other is not. While Joseph and Paul alike faced imprisonment, they were keenly aware that nothing could come by their life but what God so ordered. When a person "chooses" to give thanks...that is the greatest protector from bitterness. To read the life of Paul is to read one man facing obstacle after obstacle. Yet, his wasn't a life of complaining, moaning, groaning, hating, hostility or anger. Why? Because Paul knew that nothing came to his life but from a loving God. And the same God that Paul served...is our God today. Is your life an expression of thanksgiving unto the Lord?