



11 October 2024

## In everything give thanks

This weekend millions of people across Canada will be celebrating Thanksgiving. Family and friends gather, catch up and reminisce and, of course, turkey and pumpkin pie are fixed features on the menu.

In and above all of that, Thanksgiving is to be a time of giving thanks to God. The Old Testament songbook of Psalms gives over 40 calls and declarations of “give thanks.” It shows us that we are to express it from our heart, abundantly, publically as well as privately. The Psalms sing of thanking God for who he is and what He does, and also of thanking God “forever” — always, without end.



It is easy to thank God when life is easy and pleasant. But what about when it is not, when your nights are dark and your days are dreary, when disappointment and disaster strike, when trouble and turmoil dominate?

The apostle Paul wrote,

“in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.”  
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)

*In everything? Really?*

There are more words of advice on being thankful than you can shake a stick at. Some sound nice and have a ring of truth, others ring hollow.

“When it comes to life the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude.” (G.K. Chesterton)

“The more you practice the art of thankfulness, the more you have to be thankful for.” (Norman Vincent Peale)

When it comes to “in everything give thanks”, we find the answers to what this means in Scripture.

Let’s briefly look at just three truths from Scripture that help us understand giving thanks in everything and actually doing it.

First, this is a command of God. *Do it!* As with all of God's commands, we are to do this from the heart, sincerely, as I already noted from the Psalms. Know and count on the fact that what God directs you to do He also will give you the strength to do. The Bible tells us that God will strengthen you "with all power, according to His glorious might," will strengthen you "with power through His Spirit in the inner self," and so you then can say with the Apostle Paul, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Colossians 1:11; Ephesians 3:16; Philippians 4:13). So, give thanks to God in everything.

Second, and closely related to the first, this is God's will for you. Remember, as we are told in the opening verses of Romans chapter 12, God's will is "good and acceptable and perfect." Experts tell us spinach is nutritious and may benefit skin, hair, and bone health, as well as providing minerals and vitamins we need. Yes, it may be good *for* me, but I don't like it, it is not good *to* me. Romans chapter 12 tells us you will "prove" or experience God's will as good, acceptable and perfect as you present yourself to God to be transformed as He renews your mind. In short, God's will is not only good, acceptable and perfect *for* you, but *to* you. So, give thanks to God in everything.

Third, "in everything" includes all the "terrible, horrible, no good, very bad" situations and days. This is built on the two previous truths. We could camp here for a long time and not answer all the questions. Briefly, Paul says here we are to thank God "in" everything, not "for" everything. Yes, we recall Ephesians chapter 5 verse 20, "always giving thanks for all things." The Bible tells us to love what God loves and hate what God hates. Psalm 97 verse 10, "Hate evil, you who love the LORD." But we are also told that "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). We can't stop there. Paul continued and the "good" is defined, culminates, is fulfilled in believers being glorified. God is sovereignly over all the delightfully easy and the excruciatingly difficult days, the good and evil things as He brings about His purposes and plans. Our perspective is to be set on that. We don't know why cancer and death strike (nor should we weary ourselves with the *why*), but even in those things we can and should be thankful that our good God is in control for His glory and our good.

This Thanksgiving, every day, no matter what your circumstances and feelings are, in everything give thanks to God.

Pastor Lyle