

A Thankful Heart

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of developing a habit of thankfulness, giving thanks in all things, and continuing throughout the year.

Duration: 25:06

Scripture: Exodus 16:2-3, Acts 16:23-25, 1 Corinthians 10:10, Ephesians 5:20, Philippians 2:14, Colossians 3:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Topics: "Heart"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor Chuck Smith emphasizes the importance of giving thanks in all circumstances. He shares stories from the Bible, such as Paul and Silas praising God in prison and Daniel giving thanks despite facing discrimination. Pastor Chuck also highlights Jesus as our ultimate example of giving thanks, as he gave thanks before feeding the multitude and at the Last Supper. The message encourages listeners to develop a habit of gratitude and to trust that good can come out of any situation when we choose to give thanks.

Transcript

Oh, let the Son of God enfold you With His Spirit and His love Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul
Oh, let Him have the things that hold you And His Spirit like a dove Will descend upon your life And make you whole
Welcome to The Word for Today featuring the Bible teaching of Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, California. Today, Pastor Chuck will be taking a brief break from our current verse-by-verse study through the book of Genesis to share with us a very special message for this Thanksgiving Day. All through Scripture, we are exhorted to give thanks for all things, and yet we live in what seems to be a very thankless society.

Well, on this special edition of The Word for Today, Pastor Chuck will be encouraging us to develop a habit of giving thanks for all and in all things. And though that might seem like a tall order, Pastor Chuck has some words of support for us today as he shares from his heart a message entitled, A Thankful Heart. It is interesting that God has commanded us to give thanks.

In 1 Thessalonians 5.18, Paul wrote, In everything, give thanks. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. To the Ephesians, he wrote, Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To the Colossians, he wrote, And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called in one body, and be ye thankful. Over and over again in the Scriptures, we are commanded to be thankful, to give thanks. In the first passage, we were told to give thanks in everything.

In the second passage, in all things. And in the third, just the commandment, Be ye thankful. In spite of the commandments to be thankful, we are living in a rather thankless world.

It seems like people would rather complain than to give thanks. And yet, the Bible tells us that we are to do all things without murmurings or disputings. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said, Neither murmur, as some of them also murmured that were destroyed of the destroyer.

We remember how God's anger was kindled against the children of Israel in the wilderness because of their continual murmuring against the Lord. We can become bitter over things, and our life can become marked by bitterness. Or we can get in a habit of just griping and complaining about everything.

Have you ever noticed that there are some people that seem to find something negative and something to complain about in just about anything? If they win the lottery, then they go around complaining about all the taxes they have to pay now. While there are others who seem to just find something to be thankful for in every situation. I heard of a mission that had Saturday night services with testimonies.

And people would stand up and testify of what the Lord had done for them through the week. And there was this one man, quite poor, but every week he had a testimony and always of thanksgiving. How thankful he was.

In spite of all of the adversities and poverty, he just was constantly thanking the Lord in his testimony. And this one Saturday night as he stood in the mission giving his testimony, he told how that he was walking down the street and he saw a dollar bill lying on the pavement. And he was just so thankful that there was a dollar bill and he went to the market and he bought a dollar's worth of hamburger.

He thought, I'm going to have meat for dinner. To tie his shoestring and while he did, a dog came up, grabbed the package of hamburger and went running off. There was a fellow sitting there in the mission who was of the negative sort and was just sort of bugged that this guy was always giving thanks.

And so he spoke out and he said, yeah, what do you have to be thankful for now? And he said, I thank God I still have my appetite. And so it seems strange to me that it would be necessary to command people or to remind people to be thankful. It seems to me that thanksgiving should just be natural.

But you see, there are many people today who deny God or the existence of God. And thus they are sort of fatalist. And rather than seeing the positive or the good in things, they just feel, well, you know, it just happens and what happens happens and you can't help it.

But there's never any thought of giving thanks to God for the good things that come into their lives. We are told that one of the reasons why God's wrath is to be poured out upon the world is that neither were they thankful. They knew God, but they wouldn't glorify him as God.

Neither were they thankful. And thus the judgment of God that will come upon a thankless world. There are certain characteristics that mark the Christian's life.

If you are a child of God, these are some of the characteristics by which your life should be marked. And one of them is thankfulness. Over and over the scripture says, be thankful.

And thus, if I am truly a child of God, I should be marked by thankfulness. Another is joyfulness. And then graciousness.

And then kindness. And goodness. And meekness.

Peacefulness. And as a Christian, I should be loving. I should be giving.

And I should be forgiving. Now, if you had your choice of neighbors, would you rather have a neighbor who is marked by these characteristics? Of being thankful and joyful and gracious and kind and good and meek and peaceful and loving and giving? Or would you rather have a neighbor who is griping, complaining, angry, bitter, yelling all the time? You see, as a Christian, you should be a good neighbor. People should say, oh, I'm so glad I live next to them.

They're always so cheerful. They're always so thankful. We're exhorted in the scriptures to manifest these characteristics.

But today we want to emphasize just one of them, and that is the characteristic of thankfulness. Now, Paul wrote, in everything give thanks. Not in most things give thanks.

I think I would find it a little easier had he said, in most things give thanks. But there are some things that I find difficult to give thanks in. Yet Paul wrote that it was the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us, that we be thankful for everything.

And I surely want to be in the will of God. And I'm certain that you also desire to be in the will of God. And it is God's will that we be thankful for everything.

But we realize that we cannot really be thankful for all things unless we realize that all things are working together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. I know that no matter how tragic the situation may seem, God has allowed it to happen. And if God has allowed it to happen, it is for some good purpose.

And that ultimately, good will come out of this experience. Now, there are things that happen and I often wonder what good can possibly come from this. And I can't imagine any good coming from this adverse circumstance.

And that is when my thanksgiving then becomes an exercise of faith. I do not feel like praising God for the situation. I do not know what possible good will come from it.

But I know that God is in control, and that God has allowed it, and that He has a good purpose that will ultimately be worked out in my life through it. And so I, by faith, give thanks to God. There are many things that God has done for which I just spontaneously give thanks.

And I find that more and more as God has just been so good that I find myself just giving thanks to God without even consciously realizing. It's just spontaneously from my heart there's thanksgiving to the Lord because of His goodness and His blessings. Now, there are examples in Scriptures of people who did give thanks in adverse circumstances.

Paul, who wrote, in everything, give thanks, practiced what he preached. For we read in the Scriptures how that Paul was in prison in Philippi. He had been preaching the gospel.

He was arrested, and he was beaten unlawfully by the magistrates. And with his back bloody from the beating, he and Silas were turned over to the guard of the prisoners who put them in the dungeon and fastened them in stocks. Now, I can't think of a more dismal kind of a position to be in.

In a foreign country, fastened in stocks in the dungeon, with my back smarting because of the bleeding, the blood caking there on my back. What are Paul and Silas doing? We read at the midnight hour, they are singing praises unto God, giving thanks. And as they are singing praises, the earthquake breaks the prison walls.

The shackles are loosed. The doors opened. And the guard, thinking that the prisoners had escaped, was ready to commit suicide when Paul cried out, don't harm yourself, we're all here.

He came in trembling, and he said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? You see, good came out of it. But Paul didn't know, when he was there singing praises unto God, what good was going to come. He had no idea what good could come from that kind of a situation.

But he was praising God in the midst of the adversity, and good did come from it. We read concerning Daniel, who was in a foreign country as a prisoner of war, and how a law had been signed that was discriminatory against Daniel. In fact, the men who had the king sign the law were deliberately aiming for Daniel.

It was a law that violated Daniel's religious liberties and his convictions. The law stated that you could not pray to any god. And so we read when Daniel knew that the law was signed, he went to his house, his windows were opened in his chamber toward Jerusalem.

He knelt upon his knees for three times a day, and he prayed and gave thanks to his God, as he was accustomed to do. Under these adverse circumstances, here is Daniel giving thanks to God. We see that Jesus is really our example in giving thanks.

We read how that before he fed the multitude, he took the five loaves and two fish, and he gave thanks. When he was at the Last Supper with his disciples, we are told when he took the bread, he gave thanks, and he break it and said, take, eat, this is my body broken for you. Likewise also, when he took the cup, it said he gave thanks, saying, drink ye all of it.

And it is because of this that we've sort of developed the custom of praying and giving thanks before our meals. My little grandson, at the dinner time, he came into the kitchen and insisted that he help his mother fix dinner. And he just was so insistent, had to do something to help fix dinner.

And so, because he was so completely insistent on it, she finally said, why is it that you're wanting so much to help me fix dinner tonight? He said, I want my hands to be blessed, because they always pray, bless the hands that prepared it. Just the other day when they had gathered for dinner and were ready to give thanks, he said, wait, wait, wait, wait a minute, you don't have to do that anymore. And they said, what do you mean? And he had made a little prayer on his little recorder, and he pushes the button and has it recorded Thanksgiving.

We read that when the disciples of Jesus returned with their stories of successful ministry, that Jesus said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven. And so, the giving of thanks was something that was so natural for Jesus. In John chapter 11, we read that when he had come to the tomb where Lazarus had been buried, he ordered them to roll the stone away.

And then Jesus prayed, and he said, Father, I thank you that you hear me. That's really something to be thankful for, that God hears us when we pray. That God will give audience to us.

He'll listen to our request and our prayers. As we approach Thanksgiving Day, I would encourage you to start giving thanks today. And let's start giving thanks to the Lord.

And you'll find many, many things to be thankful for. Kay and I are getting to the age where you don't need as much sleep as we used to when we were younger. And I don't understand that.

When you're young, it seems like you need a lot of sleep. When you get older, you don't need as much sleep at all. And so, quite often, we wake up, 2.30, 3 o'clock in the morning, and you try to go back to sleep, but sometimes it's difficult to go back to sleep.

And so, we've developed a practice of alphabetic praise. Going through the alphabet and writing down a word of praise, a characteristic for which we thank the Lord, or for something for which we're thankful, and in going through the alphabet, it's interesting how that your mind gets attuned to being thankful. And you begin to think of all of the things, and I think it's good for us to stop and to think of the things for which we are thankful and should be thankful.

You know, if you start in the habit of giving thanks, you won't want to quit the day after Thanksgiving, but you'll want to continue on through the year in thanksgiving to God. And as we do, we are now living according to the will of God, because it is God's will that we be thankful in all things. Thankful for everything.

Thankful especially because His mercy endures forever, and thus we have the forgiveness of our sins because of God's mercy towards us. We have the hope of eternal life because God is so merciful to us. May God help us to be more thankful for all of His goodness and His blessings that He bestows upon us daily and make us conscious of those things.

So much to be thankful for. May God bless you this Thanksgiving season. Don't let it end.

Continue through the year. Father, we do give thanks today for the exceeding richness and the abundance of Your mercies towards us. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are Your mercies towards those that fear You.

And Lord, we pray that You'll help us to be all that You would have us to be. Thankful, joyful, peaceful, graceful, merciful. May we, Lord, reflect Your love, Your kindness, and Your forgiveness.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. As we gather together Give us love for one another May we honor You In all that we do As we seek for Your wisdom To build on firm foundation Let Your Spirit come And make us one We're so thankful For all that You have done We're so thankful For all You want to do We're so thankful For all that You have done We're so thankful for You Every day You've been faithful Every morning we're so grateful Just to be Your friend And to serve You again Fill our hearts with Your purpose Show the plans that You've made for us Lord, in every way This is Your day We're so thankful For all that

You have done We're so thankful For all You want to do We're so thankful For all that You have done We're so thankful for You We're so thankful For all that You have done We're so thankful For all You want to do We're so thankful For all that You have done We're so thankful for You May the Lord be with you and we trust that you'll have a very beautiful wonderful day of Thanksgiving as we recognize and acknowledge all that God has done for us that which God is and continues to do for us in His love and in His grace This program has been sponsored by The Word for Today in Costa Mesa, California

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