

Title: "Give Thanks in All Circumstances" (Part 1)

Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Date: November 20, 2022

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Big Idea

We all want to know God's will for our lives. Well, here in 1 Thess. 5:18 he tells us: give thanks in all circumstances. God wants us Christians to be famous for our glad-hearted gratitude. But where does this sort of thing come from? How do we get it? How do we do it?

1. The What

Christians should be famous for their glad-hearted gratitude. In view of God's redemption, we should be known by all for our spirited thanksgiving. So then the question that presses in upon us at this point, of course, is: so are you? Are you famous for your glad-hearted gratitude, or are you known more for your grumbling and discontent? Life's never quite what you want it to be; people are never quite who you want them to be; and so forth. Are you known for your thanksgiving or for your complaining; for your overflowing satisfaction or for your never-ending list of grievances? Do you walk into the room and bring people's attention to the good and the grace of God at play, or do you accent only all that's wrong and what could be better? Are you in alignment with the rest of the universe in its giving of thanks to God, or are you still, as one author has put it, "out of sync" with it all?

2. The When

The most challenging part about this idea is giving thanks even in the hard stuff of life, right? We could maybe pull off being more thankful in the good times, but even in the heartbreak, and the suffering, and the pain? I don't know. And, what we have to see, is that Paul's command to the Thessalonians here comes to them while they are facing, it would seem, a time of tremendous suffering. So either Paul is totally insane, out of his mind . . . or he knows something we don't.

3. The How

The place to which I wish to direct your attention now is that little phrase there near the end of v. 10: "in Christ Jesus . . ." That's where this gratitude comes from. It's somehow unlocked in and through the person and work of Jesus for us.

Bookend #1: 1 Thess. 5:9-10

I'm convinced that one of the main reasons we're given more to grumbling than gratitude, even as God's people, is that we're honestly not all that aware of what we've been *saved from* nor of what we've been *saved for*. We deserve wrath for our sin. We deserve God's fury. But, because Jesus took it on that cross, we're not destined for wrath. We're destined for salvation. And we don't get his fury, we get his warm embrace. We get life with him in glory forever.

Bookend #2: 1 Thess. 5:23-24

It's not just that God has grace for us on either side—in the past, in the future—but he leaves us to fend for ourselves here in the present. No! In my mind, the picture for me is something like past grace and future grace gathering as storm clouds overhead and cracking open with a fresh flood of grace for the present as well. Jesus didn't just die for us in the past so we could be together with him someday off in the future merely. He died for us so that he could be with us right now, in the midst of the mess, in whatever struggle we're facing.



Reflection Questions

- If God's will for your life is that you be thankful in all circumstances, are you? Why or why not? What has made this particularly hard for you lately? Where are you tempted most to grumble? How might Jesus and the gospel help set more gratitude in motion?
- Think about something you are struggling deeply with at the moment. How would you feel if Paul wrote you a letter, knowing all the ways you are suffering, and yet still he told you to give thanks? How could he say such a thing?
- As you look ahead to the coming holiday, what are some ways you can practically try to walk out this text as you (perhaps) gather with family or friends?

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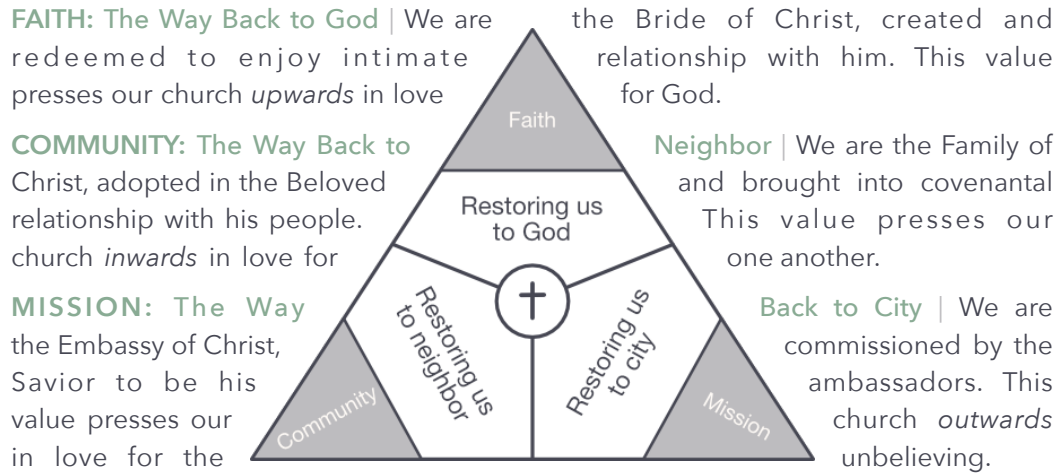


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Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

Ladies Christmas Tea!

Start the holidays with a Christmas Tea on Saturday, December 3rd. It will be a little different this year—please bring your own Christmas mug with you for a choice of hot tea, cocoa or cider, and sign up to bring a plate of treats like Christmas cookies, tea sandwiches, or scones. Kathy Wilson will be our hostess from 1:30-3:30pm at 6181 Blossom Ave. in San Jose. If you're unable to come for the whole two hours, we'll be happy to have you with us for the time that you're available. If you're new to the church we'd especially like to meet you!

Please scan the QR code below and register by November 30th with what you'd like to bring so we can know how many to expect. We hope to see you there!

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at info@mercyhillchurch.org.

Volunteer Appreciation Lunch - Save the Date!

Mercy Hill has so many wonderful volunteers who keep all the various dimensions of our ministry thriving and fruitful. And we want to appreciate them! So after the service on Sunday, December 4th, we are planning to have a special all-church lunch (think BBQ - with inside seating) as a way of saying thanks. The whole church is invited to stay after and participate as we look to particularly appreciate those who have served in various capacities throughout this last year. Please do plan to join us and be on the lookout for more info to come!

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at info@mercyhillchurch.org.

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