

**Russell Kelfer**

# **In Everything Give Thanks**

**#965-A**

**Series: In Everything Give Thanks**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • [www.dtm.org](http://www.dtm.org) • [dtm@dtm.org](mailto:dtm@dtm.org)



# Thanx 4 All

(How can I be thankful for that!!!!???)

It was a great day at the Bailey household. Dad had just been given a healthy promotion at work and the family had gathered around the dinner table to celebrate. Needless to say, visions of materialistic grandeur were racing through the minds of the family, especially the three teenaged boys, each of whom considered themselves in the poverty zone among their peers. Under Dad's chair was a box, and in that box he had wrapped up a surprise for each of the Bailey clan.

Dinner was lighthearted and relaxed, but still a sense of expectancy filled the air. Finally, when the food had been successfully devoured (and what better word can you use when three teenaged boys are involved), Dad sat back in his chair, and said, "Boys, I have a little gift for each of you—just a token to celebrate my promotion, and let you, as my family, feel that you are a part of it."

With that Dad reached into that box and began passing out presents just as though it were Christmas morning. The packages were all the same size and they were so thin you weren't even sure there was anything inside. With the zeal of a treasure hunter, each boy ripped off the paper to see what his contained. You could have cut the atmosphere with a knife for inside each of the boxes was the same thing. Each contained a yellow columnar pad much like an accountant would use, and a lead pencil worth about 35¢. On the columnar pad was printed very neatly, a list of the character qualities most needed to become successful. By each one Dad had marked the ones that boy needed to work on in order to fulfill his potential in life.

The whole thing cost little more than a dollar or two per boy. Taken to heart and used properly, it could be the most valuable gift they had ever received. Looked at from their perspective, however, though Dad had labored over each line of each page for hours, the dollar cost was insignificant.

The three boys rose from the table, tablets in hand. Danny,

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the oldest, threw his on the table and sarcastically drawled, “Thanks a lot, Dad. I hope you can afford it.” Bobby, the middle son, stood to his feet and said, “Thanks, Dad, I appreciate your thoughtfulness,” then raced to his room to call Charlene, his girlfriend, and moan, “you can’t believe what my cheap, idealistic dad just gave me.” Eddie, the younger son, however, studied the page carefully. He thought, “What a treasure of information about myself that no one else but my Dad could compile.”

Tears began to form in his eyes as he thought of the hours of labor and thoughtfulness that had gone into this simple sheet of paper. He reached over, hugged his dad, and said, “Thank you, Dad, I will cherish this for as long as I live.”

Now all three of those boys received the same gift. And all three of those boys said thank you. One said the words with open bitterness, but still he said them. One said the words with obvious hypocrisy, but still he said them. The third said the words with genuine thanksgiving. They all gave thanks. Or did they?

Incidentally, Eddie took that list, studied it, and began to work on the things his Dad had noticed needed his attention. He became the president of one of the largest corporations in the country. The other two, who simply could not honestly be thankful over being corrected, have struggled to very mediocre existences, continually battling certain character flaws in their lives—character flaws a loving father had pointed out to them years before. By the way, Dad Bailey had other presents for those three boys that day, too. He simply wanted to first give them the lists so he could gauge their responses and see just how grateful they really were.

We have a loving Father who does that, too. Sometimes before He will give us what we want, He tests us by giving us instructions or correction instead, to see if what we need is really what we want. Then He lovingly steps back to see if we really know how to be thankful. Some of us have learned, like Danny, to sarcastically reply, “Well, praise the Lord anyhow.” Or, “Gee, God, thanks, a bunch.” That phrase bothers me, because it indicates that God did the best He could but it just wasn’t quite good enough. That’s blasphemy! Others of us have learned, like Bobby, to go through the motions of giving thanks externally while proceeding to pass on to those around us the venom of bitterness or disappointment. Outwardly thankful, inwardly we are angry. Still a few others,

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however, like Eddie, seem to have learned the secret of being thankful in every situation.

Strangely enough, it is those people who seem to have the constant joy, the constant peace, the constant witness of God's leading in their lives that all of us claim to want. But, how can you praise God when you are angry or discouraged? How can you praise God when you just lost your job? Isn't that hypocritical? How can you praise God for your parents, when from your perspective, they ruined your life? How can you praise God at a funeral? Or can you? How can you praise God for your children when they are in the process of breaking your heart? How can you praise God honestly in the midst of a bad marriage? Isn't that a little phony? It is? It isn't? Is it?

Our goal is to find out. But our objective must be more than that. Our objective must be to see our own lives dramatically changed as we learn both practically and experientially how to "in everything give thanks".

### I- THE PROBLEM

The problem has, in effect, been outlined in the opening illustration. The problem is that many of us, if not most of us, as Christians, simply do not live a life of constant praise. We are affected by our emotions and we are affected by our circumstances. There are those of us who can only be thankful when we feel thankful. That may be just after a great spiritual experience or a time of prayer or a moving message or a stirring hymn. Not wanting to be hypocritical, we assume we cannot give thanks unless we feel truly thankful.

On the other hand, some of us can only be thankful when there is something circumstantial to be thankful for. When we get a raise or narrowly miss an accident, or God demonstrates His power through some kind of supernatural happening, then, we are thankful. But to be thankful in the midst of adverse circumstances—this makes no sense to us at all, because man's perspective of thanksgiving is that thanksgiving is a demonstration of gratitude for something one believes to be worth being thankful for. We offer "thanks" at mealtimes, but many are never really thankful for carrots, or liver, or squash. We give thanks, but are we thankful?

If we don't feel thankful or don't have something tangible that

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appears worth being thankful for, then what do we do? God has given us a clear answer in Scripture. It is to that answer that we turn to build this foundational portion of our lesson. It is that passage that will address the problem by looking at:

### II- THE PRINCIPLES

The principles are found in a letter Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica. He wrote it about 54 A.D. while he was staying in Corinth, and it was the first of his 14 epistles. It was written mainly to Gentile converts and was, in effect, a design for discipleship—a practical primer on living the life. In the fifth chapter of his first letter to that church Paul drew a net around some basic principles that could be so easily overlooked yet were so primary to the faith. Look with me at I Thessalonians 5, and let's begin reading with verse 14:

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

Rejoice evermore.

Pray without ceasing.

In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Quench not the Spirit.

Despise not prophesyings.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

Abstain from all appearance of evil.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

I Thessalonians 5:14-24

What we have in this series of straightforward spiritual instructions from the Apostle Paul can be likened to a delicate setting of diamonds carefully inlaid in a background of gold.

Each diamond is, of itself, beautiful, but when placed together for their maximum effect by the master craftsman, they almost

appear as one gigantic gem.

In like manner, Paul has inlaid into this setting of Christian imperatives, sparkling nuggets of spiritual truth, each in and of itself a glistening jewel, a theological gem of the highest order. But he has done more than that. Under the control of the Master Craftsman, the Holy Spirit, He has so arranged these glistening gems that each truth builds upon the other; each is woven into the setting with the golden chord of continuity until by the end of the passage we are breathlessly in awe of the majesty yet equally in awe of the practicality of the Christian life. He begins by exhorting the believers in the church at Thessalonica to pay careful attention to three specific groups of people who could easily lose their perspective in the scheme of things and end up being a reproach to Christ and, in essence, become shipwrecked on the sea of spiritual growth.

The first group was those who were unruly. The word “unruly” can best be understood in the military sense as those who are not in step or not in the ranks where they belong. “Disorderly” is another word that describes them. They simply cannot conform to the patterns the leadership of the church has set out to maintain order and keep the ministry working as a team. Paul says to warn them. The word “warn” means to call to their attention where they have fallen short. “Give them a warning ticket” would be a modern parallel.

The second group who needed special attention was the “feeble-minded”. The word literally means “little-souled”, or “low-spirited”, or “fainthearted”. It describes those in the church whose lives are characterized by defeat. They simply faint when the battle begins to be spiritually intense. Paul says it is the task of the rest of the church to recognize who these people are and quietly go about the business of comforting them, of building them up, of keeping them from falling too far.

The third group Paul addresses is the “weak”. The weak, according to the word used here, are those who are literally unable to fulfill their responsibilities due to physical or other afflictions. Instead of carrying their load in the Body of Christ, at least at this time, they are part of the load that needs to be carried. Paul says to do it! Support them, lift them, be their crutch or guide, lest they fall, so to speak, and there be no one to pick them up.

Then he makes a general statement that affects both the

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leadership of the flock and the flock itself. He says, “Be patient toward all men.” Literally, it means always keeping your temper. There simply is no excuse for short-tempered Christian leaders. The man who cannot control his own spirit cannot rule the spirits of others.

One last general statement leads up to the series of terse but powerful admonitions that form the basis for our study. Paul takes us to I Thessalonians and then to Romans by reminding us of a principle so contrary to the world’s philosophy that it bends the mind. Paul says, “See that no one render evil for evil to any man.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”<sup>2</sup> Retaliation simply is not an option for the Christian. Kindness is the Christian’s foundation for living, he goes on to say, and that leaves no place for paying back an “eye for an eye”.

Now the passage shifts gears and turns from the believer’s relationship with other believers to his relationship with God. And it is here that Paul, in staccato-like tones, etches into the human conscience a series of “sermonettes to live by” that are so simple, yet so profound, that the natural bent of the Christian is to overlook their profundity because of their simplicity. We will skip through all but the central one, then perhaps relate back to their relationship to one another as we proceed in the study.

Paul is now issuing orders from God. They are loving instructions, but none of them is optional to the successful living of the Christian life. All are essential and all are uncompromising. They are simple statements of fact that demand absolute adherence in order for the life to be a life of victory. They form a sandwich of essentials, the center of which will be the theme verse of this series.

First he says “Rejoice evermore.”<sup>3</sup> Now I don’t know about you, but that seems quite simplistic and quite idealistic to me. It is, if taken by itself; but if you consider this to be the message and allow the next two verses to explain the method, it ceases to be so idealistic and becomes essential instead. To “rejoice evermore” means that the Christian at no time in his pilgrimage is justified in being without joy.

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<sup>1</sup> I Thessalonians 5:15

<sup>2</sup> Romans 12:19

<sup>3</sup> I Thessalonians 5:16



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And what is joy? Joy is that “inner confidence in God that views all of life from God’s perspective and is thus unaffected by circumstances.” Paul is saying, based on what real joy is, and how real joy is received, the believer ought never to have an occasion where his or her life does not manifest the joy of the Lord. You say, “No way! I have already failed the test.” Now wait a minute; Paul isn’t saying you *are* at that place; Paul wants to tell you how to *get* to that place. He is saying, “God wants you to always be overflowing with the constancy of His joy, and in order to have that, here is what you must do.”

*You must pray without ceasing.*<sup>4</sup> If you’re like I am, you have already skipped lightly over to another passage, for Paul has now issued two seemingly impossible commands the way a Commanding Officer would calmly instruct his cadets to simply at the count of nine, “Jump as high as you can until you touch the moon.” Like the moon, these two orders are just out of reach. Always be joyful? Never stop praying? Lord, give me a break! How can I do that? I’ve got too many circumstances in my life that interfere with my joy—a sick baby; a mean boss; an unforgiving mate. How can I be joyful when things aren’t going well? And Lord, I just don’t feel joyful; I just don’t feel like praying. God understands. So now we take off the wrapping and look at the contents. We open up the sandwich and see what’s inside. How can I always be joyful? How can I always be prayerful? Here’s how.

*In everything give thanks.*<sup>5</sup> Make every day Thanksgiving. Paul now summarizes these seemingly unperformable tasks with the most difficult one of all. He says *always* be thankful and *always* give thanks. That’s just about enough for most of us to assume that the apostle is off in some make-believe world, passing out spiritual clichés like samples in a candy shop. Always be joyful; always be prayerful; always be thankful.

What gall this guy has to make such intense demands of the average, run-of-the-mill Christian like us. Maybe he’ll at least give us an escape clause. How does the verse end? “For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”<sup>6</sup>

That does it. Now he has the audacity not only to demand of us three things we cannot do; he follows those demands with an

<sup>4</sup> I Thessalonians 5:17

<sup>5</sup> I Thessalonians 5:18a

<sup>6</sup> I Thessalonians 5:18b

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unequivocal statement that boldly insists that if you want to do the will of God, this is how you do it.

It would appear then, that we must examine at least this central statement more carefully. Tucked within its context we just may find one of the keys to the vital Christian life. Let's take it apart a word at a time. Let's ask ourselves four quick questions about this verse. Let's ask where? when? what? and why?

First *Where?* And strangely enough, this is the most vital question of all. The answer is "in"...(in everything) as we shall see in a moment, but the word "in" holds a key to understanding this incredibly demanding commandment that Paul claims to be the will of God for each Christian. The word "in" literally means "being or remaining within," with the primary idea of rest in any place or thing.

So Paul is not saying "*for* everything give thanks". He is saying "*in* everything give thanks". You could almost interpret it "if necessary, in spite of everything, give thanks", for the issue isn't, "Can I praise God for this illness?" It isn't, "Can I praise God for this crisis?" It isn't, "Can I praise God for this setback?" The issue is, "In spite of this circumstance, can I be at rest within it, giving thanks in spite of it?" That ought to set some of us free to look further into the truth of it all. God isn't saying, "Praise God for your grandmother's death." God isn't saying, "Praise God that you lost your job." God isn't saying, "Praise God that you wrecked your car." God is saying that if you are in the will of God, constantly praying, always rejoicing, even *in* these circumstances, you will be able to *give thanks*.

So the "where" is *within the circumstances*. Now we must ask when? in what circumstances? Quickly, Paul answers, in *all circumstances*. This is vital. The word translated "everything" here is a word that means "the whole of an object without exception". In other words, there are no escape clauses. Not almost all situations, not all situations, but in everything.

There is absolutely no crisis, no trauma, no person, no incident, no circumstance that can come into your life that will make this commandment null and void. You and I, if we are to do the will of God, are commanded by God to constantly rest in the midst of each and every circumstance without exception, and do what?

*Give thanks*. The word "give" means someone else receives

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something you once had. The word “thanks” (eucharisteo) means literally to “show oneself to be grateful” or to demonstrate gratitude through some form of expression. So “to give thanks” means that you first of all have a spirit of gratitude to give away, and then secondly, you consciously, by an act of your will, choose to express that gratitude to someone who deserves it—in this case to God.

The word is used in Romans 1:21 where we read

When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, *neither were thankful*, but became vain in their imagination.

It is used in I Timothy 2:1 where Paul encouraged Timothy that

...first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and *giving of thanks* be made for all men;

It is used in II Thessalonians 2:13a, too. There it says

But we are bound to *give thanks* always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord,

There are dozens more examples and we will be looking at them throughout the series, but you can easily see by these three that the word involves two basic thoughts: *being* thankful, and then *giving* thanks. As the passage indicates, there is absolutely no situation in your life today or in any day to come that is worthy of exception to this commandment. No matter what the situation, you are commanded to give thanks, *that is*, to *be thankful* and then to *express that thankfulness in some way to God*.

And Beloved, our God is not cruel. He does not call upon us to do anything that He in us is not willing to do. Verse 24 explains that.

Faithful is He who is calling you [to Himself] and utterly trustworthy, and He will also do it [fulfill His call by hallowing and keeping you].  
I Thessalonians 5:24 (Amplified Bible)

The power to become is not your problem; the choice to obey is your problem. You and I have been given a seemingly impossible set of commands, and yet we have been promised that the power to obey them is not an issue. The choice to obey them is the issue.

We want to come back to this passage before this book is over and lay hold of that golden thread once again as it weaves its way through such vital areas as “grieving the Spirit”, “testing all things”, and “abstaining from the appearance of evil”. But

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this lesson is foundational in nature, and the foundation of our search centers around verse 18 of I Thessalonians chapter 5, so we will stop there for now and ask ourselves: “If this is the problem and this is the principle, then what is the process? How do we make it work?”

In this lesson we will look at the process in general, and then in the next few lessons, we will search the treasures of the Word for how this amazing life-changing commandment fits into the total plan of God for the Christian. We want to know how it relates to the past, how it relates to the future, how it relates to our responses today and tomorrow. But now, let’s simply concentrate on pouring the foundation, on mixing the concrete of application, so that as it begins to harden, we can build upon it with complete confidence.

### III- THE PROCESS

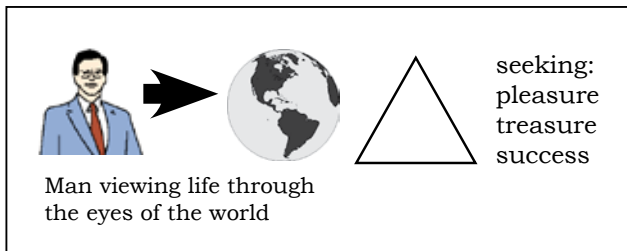
To understand the process, we are going to examine three basic concepts, and then I am going to give you an assignment to do. These three concepts will be examined in more detail as this series proceeds, but again, for foundational purposes, we must at least touch on them at the outset.

We want to look at these three thoughts:

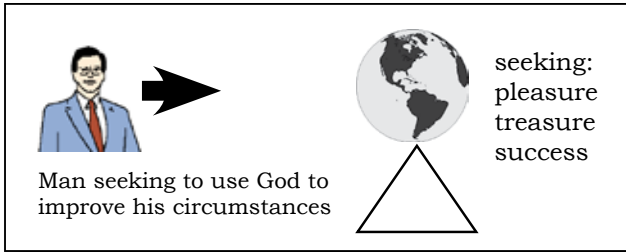
- A- The Principle of Perspective
- B- The Fallacy of Feelings
- C- The Thrust of Thanksgiving

First, The Principle of Perspective. It is the central issue that divides all of Christianity, and certainly the one issue that sets us apart as Christians from the rest of the world.

Diagrammed, it would look like this:



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It is a description of life from three vantage points. First, there is the vantage point of the unbeliever. He or she sees life through the eyes of the world. The eyes of the world look for three basic things: pleasure, treasure, and success, or as the Bible puts it, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.”<sup>7</sup> The world’s ultimate goal is the satisfaction of self, the finding of self, the development of self. Man’s main concern is a “self” image. Man looks at his fellow man, at God, and at the church and asks, “How then can they best meet *my* needs?”

The second illustration demonstrates how Satan would like the Christian to view life. It is the “double-minded” mentality James<sup>8</sup> speaks of, and it sees the world from nearly the same vantage point it did before conversion. Pleasure, treasure, and success are still vital; only now God has entered the picture; and as a special, chosen child of His, they come to feel that now that He has come into their lives, they have a supernatural tool to use to accumulate physical pleasures and physical treasures.

It is the same lie Satan sold Eve in the garden and the same lie that he tried to sell Jesus in the wilderness. He says God is a spiritual genie we rub to improve our circumstances while we attempt to serve Him in a physical world. So while the unbeliever sees tribulation or unpleasant circumstances as an unavoidable

<sup>7</sup> I John 2:16

<sup>8</sup> James 1:8

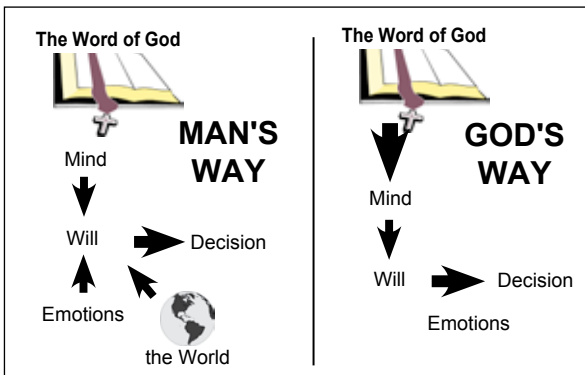
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part of life, the double-minded Christian sees circumstances as a satanic interruption of God's divine plan to grant His children treasure, pleasure, and success. His job is to "serve God" and in order to facilitate that, God wants him to be healthy, wealthy, and apparently wise.

That is why in either case, tribulation or difficulties are seen as either natural or supernatural intrusions into man's quest to achieve his goals. I believe, however, that from God's perspective, life looks 180° different. God's plan is for His child to view *all* of life from the vantage point of the spiritual. What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world, that is if he gained everything the world counts as vital and missed the mark spiritually? The answer is he'd have nothing. So instead of viewing God as an ally to meet *my* needs, I am to view every circumstance that comes into my life from God's vantage point, which is not pleasure, treasure, or success in this world, but rather demonstration, transformation, and multiplication in the spiritual realm.

In other words, how can a sovereign God demonstrate His power, transform my spirit, and multiply His Kingdom through this situation? Until our perspective becomes wholly God's, we *cannot* honestly "in everything give thanks." (More about that in a later lesson.)

Secondly, we must, in passing, touch on the fallacy of feelings, for while the argument that "the circumstances don't warrant being thankful" is a matter of perspective, the "I don't feel thankful" mentality poses an even more difficult argument for some. Diagrammed, it looks like this:



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Simply put, you and I have a mind; we have emotions, and we have a will. The mind thinks (sometimes), the emotions feel (most of the time), and the will responds to one or the other and makes choices. Sometimes those choices are reflected in overt activities, sometimes merely in conscious internal responses, but every minute of every day, whether we are active or not, we are in the process of making choices.

Beloved, feelings were never intended to be partners in the decision-making process. They were intended to be only sensors in the physical realm which ultimately will come into harmony with the Word if allowed to be under the control of the Spirit long enough. Don't make spiritual choices based on how you feel. A bad hamburger can affect how you feel. A disobedient child can affect how you feel. A cloudy day can affect how you feel. There is one basis for deciding, and that basis is the Word of God. If the Scripture says "in everything give thanks" and your feelings protest (and usually they will), you have a choice to make—an instantaneous choice—and it is a clear one. Obey the Word, and quietly give your emotions to God. He will comfort you and encourage you as you do what He has told you to do.

Finally, and here is the most important point of all. Remember the thrust of Thanksgiving. The question of questions is: In everything give thanks for *what*? I want to see life from God's vantage point, and I know that all things work together for good. I want to make my choices based on the clear Word of God, not on the uncertain call of the trumpet of my emotions. But let's say I was driving to work and out of the clear blue sky, a car pulls in front of me, with a drunk man driving. He runs me off the road, totals my car and puts me in the hospital. Here I am in the ambulance, riding to Dollarville General Hospital, in agonizing pain, and you are saying to me, "Russell, give thanks." For what?

Well, first of all, remember your perspective. Your body is God's and it's temporary. He can do what He wants with it. (He is saving one for you that is indestructible. This one isn't.) Your finances are God's and are temporal. He can do what He wants with them. (He is saving some treasures for you that are incorruptible; these aren't.) God isn't after pleasure (that's good, there's nothing pleasurable about being in an ambulance), and He isn't after treasure (that's good, because the guy that hit you couldn't even spell insurance let alone buy any), and He isn't after success (and that's good, because business is bad and you're

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about to miss a meeting with the only good prospect you've had in a month.) What is God after?

God is after *demonstration, transformation, and multiplication*. He wants to demonstrate His character. He wants to change you into His likeness, and in the process, he wants to cause those about you to come to know Him as well.

And He is succeeding! If His strength is made perfect in weakness, you've never been stronger than you are in that ambulance. Thank Him. If you have an ungrateful spirit, or an impatient spirit, and you have been asking God to "do whatever it takes", thank Him, Beloved. He just did it. And if you have asked Him to use you to change other lives, to send you wherever He wanted you to be, He just sent you. So ask Him for the grace to forget your pain and look around you at the technicians, the nurses, the doctors, the patients, and quietly, lovingly, demonstrate Christ to them.

So you are to be thankful that God is doing whatever He needs to do in order to bring about demonstration, transformation, and multiplication. You can thank Him for that. But wait a minute. That's not enough! Read Paul's prayers in the midst of his imprisonment. He was constantly giving thanks. It wasn't that he was thankful for his circumstances, but he was often thankful for how God was using those circumstances to demonstrate His power, to transform the saints and to multiply the ministry. But go deeper. Read them all in context. Do you see what it was that Paul was really thankful for? As he continually gave thanks in the midst of such things as imprisonment, beatings, persecution, and personal pain, he was not only thankful for what God was doing, he was thankful for *who God is*.<sup>9</sup>

There is the secret. God does what He does because He *is* who He *is*. And if you can learn not only to thank God in every single circumstance He allows to come your way, if you can in the midst of those circumstances, learn to thank Him for that quality of His character that He is demonstrating through that circumstance, then you will have entered into that sacred Holy place that exists in the center of the heart of God where so few of His Children ever dare to enter. And Beloved, having entered, you will discover a meaning to life so precious, a power so dynamic, a vision so

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<sup>9</sup> Philippians 1:3,4; 4:6



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all-encompassing that what you considered to be living before will pale into insignificance.

Learn to stop in every situation and quietly behold that facet of the character of God that seems to have been most revealed through that situation. You will have escaped from the prison of double mindedness into the magnificent freedom of thanksgiving as you begin viewing every incident in your life through the lens of the nature of God.

For example, and we will deal with it in great detail in the next lesson, suppose something happens to you tomorrow that causes you great grief. If you view life from man's perspective, it isn't fair. If you respond to your feelings, you will become depressed and angry. But if you listen to the Word of God, you will realize that He is demonstrating His Grace (demonstration). He is transforming you by giving you a deeper understanding of grief (transformation), and He is allowing you to pour that understanding into other lives (multiplication).

But Beloved, He wants you to do more than that. He is allowing you to experience grief so you can learn to thank Him for His perfect Love. He wants you to cry, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation [trials]."<sup>10</sup>

So thank Him first for comforting you, whether you feel comforted or not; then thank Him for that quality of love that only He possesses. Give thanks, not for the occasion and not just for His comfort. Give thanks for *who He is: The God of all comfort*—perfect love, beyond understanding. As you worship Him for His love, He will be able to reveal that love in depths you have never experienced. Why? because you didn't cry? No, you may be crying. It will be because even through your tears, you gave thanks.

Do you grasp the concept? In the midst of your loneliness, thank Him that He is *omnipresent*, and rest! He will never leave you or forsake you. In the midst of spiritual warfare, thank Him that He is *omnipotent*, and rest! The battle that really counts has been won. In the midst of the discovery that you have failed, thank Him for His mercy, and rest! Our finite minds cannot even conceive the depth of His forgiveness. He has allowed us to need it so we can discover more of Him by giving thanks. In the midst

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<sup>10</sup> II Corinthians 1:3,4

## In Everything Give Thanks

of a time of great decision, thank Him for His *omniscience*. He knows; He understands; He has a plan.

Perhaps you cannot see it, but thank Him—by faith. Thank Him and rest. In the midst of a great trial, thank Him for His grace. He alone can enable you to be in that trial the man or woman He already is in you. Thank Him for His grace. You see, there will never be an incident in your life that does not illustrate at least one facet of the character of God, and there is not one facet of the character of God that does not generate immediate thanksgiving. Therefore, there is not one thing that can ever happen in your life in which you cannot honestly *give thanks*.

And the best part of all is that “faithful is He who hath called you...*He will do it.*”<sup>11</sup> It doesn’t matter how you feel. The Spirit of God lives in you, and the Spirit of God is always thankful for the nature of God, so all you need to do is quietly yield yourself into His hands and let Him. The result? You will “in everything give thanks”. Everything? Everything.

Your assignment is to do that. Consciously, regardless of the nature of the circumstances, search out that aspect of the nature of God that He is revealing to you through that situation until you become thankful, and then, seeing life from His perspective, give thanks.

You know what will happen to you? You will start rejoicing evermore. You know what else will happen? You will be so busy praising God, you’ll find yourself praying without ceasing. You will be so busy focusing on the character of God, you would rather die than do anything to quench His Spirit. One more thing will happen, Beloved. You will never again have to say, “I don’t know the will of God in this situation.”

For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you in every situation. Because of who He is, the will of God in Christ Jesus for you is to be thankful for who He is, and *being* thankful, to *give* thanks.

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<sup>11</sup> I Thessalonians 5:24

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JUST TAKE A WEEK

Just take a week that's all I ask  
And change your point of view,  
Start praising God for who He is,  
Not just what He's done for you.

Take any situation  
That you have ever known,  
Not one will change the awesome fact  
That God is on His throne.

Praise Him morning, noon, and night  
You'll stand on holy sod,  
Once you learn to praise Him,  
Just because He's God.

A Challenge to Further Study and Application

Take a notebook and start a page for each of the different attributes of God.

Then take a concordance, a topical Bible, and/or a study book on the character of God, and begin listing the passages that pertain to each of those qualities.

Write out one or more key verses for each attribute on small cards to carry with you.

Ask God at the beginning of each day to reveal more of Himself to you that day by revealing an aspect of His character through the things that He brings into your life. Ask Him to make you sensitive to what qualities He is speaking to you about.

As circumstances arise that are obviously divine interruptions (preplanned blessings by God's definition), draw out the cards that represent that quality of God that is most obvious to you in that situation.

Begin thanking God immediately for that part of His nature that is being demonstrated as He makes Himself known through that circumstance. Meditate on the verses that define that quality, and praise Him for who He is.

Ask God at that moment to use that incident to demonstrate

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His power, to transform your character into His, and to use it as a tool either to equip you to minister or to minister right then.

Take a concordance and look up all the verses you can on giving thanks and being thankful. Begin to list the circumstances and the conditions found in Scripture that ought to cause us to praise, and those which appear to be hindrances to praise. Read the beatitudes and see what kinds of situations God calls “blessings” or “causes for praise”.

Finally, ask God to make this week a week of praise and thanksgiving in your life.

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10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230  
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

[www.dtm.org](http://www.dtm.org) • [dtm@dtm.org](mailto:dtm@dtm.org) • © Russell Kelfer

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