

## Unthankfulness

Clearly the will and command of God is that His people be filled with thanksgiving to Him. Just like anxiety, if a friend tells you to be thankful, it's good advice. When God tells you to be thankful, it is a moral obligation.

To fail to heed Him, is sin. Unthankfulness or thanklessness is sin.

READ

Psalm 118:28-29

Psalm 30:11-12

Psalm 106:47

Ephesians 5:18-20

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Philippians 1:3-6

Philippians 4:6

Luke 17:11-19

There are two pathways relative to thankfulness: God's way (as we saw) and the devil's way. Failing to give God honor and thanklessness characterize the people of the world not the people of God:

READ: Romans 1:18-32

- What is the foundation of our thanksgiving?

*[The gospel]*

*[The gospel applied to us]*

*[Not our circumstances – something objective, not subjective]*

READ Romans 8:28-39

God has ordered **certain ends** in our salvation. In other words, when He saves us, He has certain expectations of us. Thanks is very high on His list

READ: 2 Corinthians 4:15

*JMAC: Christians today, fussing and fuming and stressed out, disappointed, depressed about every little thing in their life that doesn't go right, that's really a disgusting sin. Your heart ought to be so overflowing with thanks that it ought to redound, as it [2 Cor 4:15] says at the end of the verse or abound to the glory of God. That's what happens, you see, when saving grace comes and spreads among people, it just causes more giving of thanks.<sup>1</sup>*

READ: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

God has made thanksgiving a part of our giving. Both that we who give will give thanks and for those who receive there would be giving of thanks.

READ Ephesians 5:1-21

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph quotations are from John MacArthur's sermon "Fundamental Christian Attitudes: Thankfulness" given in 1997 found on [www.biblebb.com](http://www.biblebb.com)

Thankfulness is a woven part of the character of those who profess to follow Christ. Twice in this passage, Paul makes a comparison: 5:3-4, 5:18-21.

*JMAC: Now thanksgiving is the normal pattern and we should be in the hallelujah chorus thanking the Lord for His mercy in saving us. We should be thanking Him for all the blessings He pours upon us for the way in which we can give and extend those gifts into the lives of others and cause more thanks. Thanks should come out of our mouths every time we open it. We should be thankful in everything, constantly, unceasingly because the Spirit is controlling our lives. And if He is, we will be. And when you're not thankful, the Spirit's not in control.*

READ: Philippians 4:4-6, Colossians 2:6-7, 3:12-15

- Do you think it is easier to be thankful in the Lord or thankless in the Lord?

*[Thankful – it is the new norm for those in Him]*

In these passages, Paul seems to establish thanksgiving as a normal part of walking with Christ. He doesn't ignore the difficulties of our lives but he wraps them in thankful prayer.

Still:

*JMAC: Thomas Hardy was right. You know, he said there are some people who can find the manure pile in any meadow.*

Jesus, however, Himself was a thankful man.

READ: Matthew 11:25, John 11:38-44

*JMAC: You wouldn't really think that Jesus would need to thank the Father for anything since He was God and since the plan was really equally His. But, what a wonderful example it is. He thanked the Father for the privilege of ministry. He thanked the Father for hearing His prayer for power on behalf of Lazarus. He could even thank the Father for the death that He would die to redeem sinners.*

- Why are we unthankful?

*[I deserve this]*

*[I don't like what You've given to me]*

I will follow MacArthur's six reasons as we explore this question, "why are we unthankful?"

1. We are not in Christ – 2 Corinthians 13:5; examine yourselves

Clearly, the passages we have already read indicate that thanksgiving is woven into the fabric of all those who walk with Christ. If it rarely characterizes your walk, then heeding Paul's advice is urgent.

2. We doubt the sovereignty of God; we doubt God

- What do you make of that reason?

*JMAC: If you don't think God is really in charge...if you're not sure God is really all wise, if you're not sure He knows everything about everything, if you're not sure He really loves you as His own, if you're not sure He really has your best interest in mind, if you're not sure He's trying to perfect you into the image of His Son, if you don't understand your God and His purposes then you may not be thankful....If you doubt that, you're going to have a problem being thankful.*

### 3. Selfishness

- How do you think selfishness makes us thankless?

*[I'm not getting what I want]*

*JMAC: No matter what I've got I don't have what I really want, I don't have enough. I want more...my will is more important than God's will. I don't know what God has for me, but I know what I want from me and God ought to deliver.*

### 4. Worldliness

READ: James 4:2-4

*JMAC: If you're into the pleasures and the people and the places and the possessions and the pursuits and the popularity and the prestige and you just want all the stuff that the worlds says makes people satisfied and happy, you're going to have trouble being thankful cause you're never going to have all of that and when you get some it won't be enough.*

### 5. Critical spirit

- How does a critical, condescending attitude makes thankfulness impossible?

*[Coveting]*

*[Judging]*

*JMAC: You get that by having unrealistic expectations of what you deserve. You get that because you think you ought to control everything and there are some things you can't control and that bothers you. You get that and then you feed it like a monster until it becomes a dinosaur.*

### 6. Impatience

*JMAC: God isn't moving fast enough. It's not so much that they want this or that it's that they want it now. They've got their own timetable. And the perception is that God's not on their schedule.*

There are many benefit thankfulness.<sup>2</sup> Just as in obeying all the commandments comes the blessing of the pleasure of our Heavenly Father, thankfulness comes with many blessings.

1. As soon as you are thankful, you enter the presence of God.

Why do you think this is so?

2. As soon as you are thankful, you start to see your life differently, through God's eyes.

- Where is Scripture would you go to see a description of how God sees things?

*[2 Corinthians 4:17-18]*

*[Revelation 21:5]*

3. As soon as you are thankful, you defeat Satan's efforts to control your interpretation of reality

Satan gave Eve a new interpretation of reality. One that made her indifferent and unthankful for what God had given her. As a result, she wanted more.

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<sup>2</sup> See Sue Lutz, "Thankfulness: Even when it Hurts" in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Winter, 2002).

“It is one of God’s ways to reset our default mode, to renew our minds and put us in touch with our new heart, which knows that God is good”

4. As soon as you are thankful, you begin to link your life to God’s promises.

- How does this work?

*[You stop seeing what He is not doing or what He has not done that in your minds you think He should’ve and you start seeing how He is keeping His promises]*

5. As soon as you are thankful, you start to see not only your situation but yourself – your own heart – through God’s eyes.

6. Thankfulness as preventative

Had you ever considered that thanksgiving is a preventative? “If you make the choice to be thankful, there are a lot of battles you probably won’t have to fight. It’s as if you chose the road with fewer potholes”

READ: Deuteronomy 8:11-18

If you are thankful –

It’s harder to be fearful of circumstances or people; you know God is in control

You are less likely to be devastated by criticism; you know God loves and accepts you

It’s harder to be cynical and sarcastic about life; you know God has a good purpose

It’s harder to be proud

It’s harder to be self-righteously angry

It’s much harder to be bitter and unforgiving

It’s harder to be hopeless

It’s harder to be demanding and fixated on your problems

It’s harder to be greedy or envious

It’s harder to lust after other women

It’s harder to be caught up in dreams of how your life should’ve been

Let’s let John MacArthur close:

*We have so much to be thankful for, beloved. God’s holiness that makes Him perfect and He never makes a mistake. God’s goodness and mercy which is always available, which is overflowing and abounding toward us. The gift of Jesus Christ, that unspeakable gift for which we are thankful. All good gifts that flow down from the Father of lights, victory over sin and death, divine guidance, complete provision for all our needs, the hope of heaven, the power of the Word and on and on and on.*