

CrossRoads Baptist Church
March 26, 2008 6:30 p.m.
I Thessalonians 5:16-18
Will of God Series #8

The Will of God is for you to be thankful

We are at one of those passages in the Bible that we honestly ask, “Could God mean what He says?” This seems like an impossibility. Three direct commands. One commentator said, “It is like a general speaking to his troops. They are standing orders of the Christian church.”

These are three diamond drops for us to see. Look at them again:

1. Rejoice always.

Be cheerful, don't let things get you done.

It is a command calling for all saints to continually make a personal choice to rejoice.

This rejoicing is not something made up, but rather comes from the Holy Spirit. I Thess. 1:6 and joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Ephesians 5:20 “giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” is in the context of being spirit filled.

2. Pray without ceasing.

NLT says, “Keep on praying.”

Phillips says, “Never stop praying.”

Charles Spurgeon said, “When joy and prayer are married their first born child is gratitude.”

Stay in an atmosphere of prayer, of close proximity to and of God.

3. Give thanks in all things

What a command.

Give thanks “in all things.” In the midst of the storms, the backsliding of the children, the financial woes, the tough times.

But he said, “all things.” Not just “some” things. In all things.

“This is the will of God.”

Now, these three are in a imperative mood meaning they are commands given to us. Remember, God does not command us to do something that He does not equip us to do it.

We are not to rejoice, pray and give thanks when we just feel like. The thought here is not “This is the will of God, you must do it.” But, “this is the will of God, you can do it.”

As I have pondered these things, I want to take the last command as the central command. I believe it's the trigger command here than when we give thanks in all things, it constitutes prayer and rejoicing.

Let me show you some things six things thanksgiving does:

- I. Thanksgiving assures His presence with us in that situation.

Psalm 100:4 “Enter into gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.”

Psalm 95:2 “Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.”

Jesus is there and He is there for strength and comfort. In fact the very thought of “comfort” is that He is alongside of us.

Sometime when tough times come the devil tells us that God has forsaken us and does not love us; but instead when we start giving thanks, we can be assured He is with us.

II. Thanksgiving assures His purposes for that situation will be revealed.

When Jesus is present, He is always there to redeem the situation. It does not matter what the situation is, God is able to redeem that situation for His glory and our good.

Romans 8:28

Nothing can thwart the plans and purposes of God.

Proverbs 21:30 “There is no wisdom or understanding or counsel against the Lord.”

It is hard to trust God when we do not understand the reasons for the pains or afflictions. But we can trust God – He is our heavenly Father.

Jeremiah 17:7 “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose hope is the Lord.”

III. Thanksgiving assures His plans are always best.

Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

The NIV here says, “I know the plans I have toward you...”

When we believe that God’s plans are always best, then we will stop the complaining.

Too often we come burdened down with our problems, and fail to give him thanks for reaching us and keeping us in so many ways. Not one true lover of the Lord can say that he has ever failed.

William Law wrote in 1729 in his famous book **A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life** wrote that...

If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make it a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. For it is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it to a blessing. Could you, therefore, work miracles, you could not do more for yourself than by this thankful spirit, for it heals with a word speaking, and turns all that it touches into happiness

IV. Thanksgiving assures our pride will be defeated.

Pride is at the very heart of every sin. In fact, you can’t even spell pride with the very center of the word being “I.”

One of the most arrogant things a person can do is not to acknowledge something someone has done for you by refusing or forgetting to say, “thanks.”

The Bible clearly teaches that a thankless heart is the very heart of sinful humanity and fallen mankind.

Romans 1:21 “Because they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful....”

II Timothy 3:1-5 is a passage that tells us “perilous times will come” and describes what type of sins will be evident in those days: “lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving....” Then in verse 5 he ends the list by saying, “And from such people turn away!”

Being unthankful is a major sin.

V. Thanksgiving assures our praise will be fresh.

Psalm 92:1-2 “It is good to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; To declare Your lovingkindness in the

morning, and your faithfulness every night.”

When you are giving thanks, it is fresh.

VI. Thanksgiving assures our prayers will be heard and our joy will be real.

This is what God has shown me in this passage. When we start giving thanks “in everything” then we are in the presence of God and we are praying and we’ll know that our joy will begin to rise.

It is undeniable – when you complain, you feel sad and down. When you are thankful, you feel good and up.

Paul often links these three together:
Philippians 4:6 “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;”

Wiersbe has some excellent advice writing that...
When a Christian finds himself in a difficult situation, he should immediately give thanks to the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit, to keep his heart from complaining and fretting. The devil moves in when a Christian starts to complain, but thanksgiving in the Spirit defeats the devil and glorifies the Lord. “In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1Thes. 5:18). The word **gratitude** comes from the same root word as grace. If we have experienced the grace of God, then we ought to be grateful for what God brings to us. **Thank** and **think** also come from the same root word. If we would think more, we would thank more. (Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor)

David Wilkerson:
The longer I live and the closer I get to the end of my race here on earth, the more I feel the need to adore him through thanking him, in all things.

When her children were rebelling against the Lord, Ruth Bell Graham found herself occasionally torn apart by worry. One night while abroad, she awoke suddenly in the middle of the night worrying about her son. A current of worry surged through her like an electric shock. She lay in bed and tried to pray, but she suffered from galloping anxiety, one fear piling upon another. She looked at the clock and it was around three o’clock. She was exhausted, yet she knew she would be unable to go back to sleep. Suddenly the Lord seemed to say to her, “Quit studying the problems and start studying the promises.”

She turned on the light, got out her Bible, and the first verses that came to her were these, Philippians 4:6-7. As she read those words, she suddenly realized that the missing ingredient in her prayers had been thanksgiving. “...in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

She put down her Bible and spent time worshipping God for Who and what He is. She later wrote, “I began to thank God for giving me this one I loved so dearly in the first place. I even thanked him for the difficult spots which had taught me so much. And you know what happened? It was as if someone turned on the light in my mind and heart, and the little fears and worries that had been nibbling away in the darkness like mice and cockroaches hurriedly scuttled for cover. That was when I learned that worship and worry cannot live in the same heart. They are mutually exclusive.” (In Everything Give Thanks)

Closing:

What are you currently going through?

Can you be thankful right now in that situation?

What has been the hardest thing you have been through in the last year? Will you right now give thanks in it and for it?