

Trinity Home Teams

Sermon Notes / April 12, 2026

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 / The Grace of Gratitude

1. What is Paul saying 1 Cor. 7:21 to the bondservant regarding his unfortunate circumstances? How to apply?
2. Everyone believes they deserve better, right? Why is an entitlement mindset so dangerous to a Christian?
3. How have you seen God's rich mercy and grace at work in your life this week? Don't just ponder it; share it – *out loud!*

In this passage, each action is the outward expression of an inward disposition wrought in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit. **Rejoicing** flows from a heart filled with joy. **Prayer** proceeds from a place of desperation, dependence, and faith. **Thanksgiving** issues forth from a spirit of gratitude. These are not natural to fallen man but are created, and nourished by the Holy Spirit.

1 Thes. 5:16-18 – *Rejoice always,* ¹⁷ *pray without ceasing,* ¹⁸ *give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

Three injunctions – *rejoice, pray, give thanks* – all go together. Let's focus on the third command: "*give thanks in all circumstances.*" To be characterized by true gratitude is beyond the capacity of man. Only the Spirit of God living in you can cause you to be grateful.

Rom. 1:21 – *For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking; their foolish hearts were darkened.*

We may be thankful for first responders or others who make sacrifices, but gratitude's ultimate terminus, or end, is God. We are to be grateful fully and finally to God – for all that occurs is sovereignly ordained by him. Therefore, to be characterized by ingratitude is to neglect to acknowledge the Giver of all good things, principally his love in the redemptive work of Christ.

Gratitude is fostered and accompanied by a humble heart, implicit trust in God and contentment in Christ; it culminates in thanksgiving and worship.

A humble heart

It's impossible to conceive of the coexistence of pride and gratitude. Gratitude looks away from the self.

Humility results when, by God's grace, we rightly see our total corruption and total inability before God; we see that we are incapable of carrying out a single righteous thought or deed that would commend us to God. It's not that we are incomplete but still better than others; we are all in the same condition apart from Christ, and in Christ, we are all in the same position.

Because what we have is given freely and not earned, we do not have to struggle to cling to it; the One who has given it secures it for us. We can therefore turn our

attention to Him and to those who bear his image. We are to live with humility and gentleness (**Eph. 4:2**); in humility reckon others better than yourselves (**Phil. 2:3**); put on humility (**Col. 3:12**); be clothed with humility (**1 Pet. 5:5**); humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God (**1 Pet. 5:6**); walk humbly with your God (**Mic. 6:8**); in humility accept the implanted word (**Jas. 1:21**); seek righteousness, seek humility (**Zeph. 2:3**); be humble in spirit (**1 Pet. 3:8**).

Implicit Trust in God

Many condemn God's motives. John Shelby Spong, a liberal theologian, said, "(The God of the Bible is) a God I cannot respect, much less worship, a deity whose needs and prejudices are at least as large as my own."

A proper view of God is crucial, not only for salvation, but also to develop a spirit of gratitude. As Creator, God is the author of all creation; therefore, all creation is subject to him and accountable to him. In other words, God is all-powerful. Unchallenged power, however, does not itself engender trust. History is replete with powerful men who were deceitful, exploitative, and evil.

The difference is that God is not only omnipotent; he is also omnibenevolent, so he is inherently good, and everything he does is good. This means that he cannot lie, so he can be taken at his word. Therefore, since he is all-powerful and all-good, he can be trusted implicitly.

Genesis 50:20 (JOSEPH): "you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."

Contentment in Christ

The Ten Commandments conclude with a prohibition on covetousness. The spirit of natural man: "I am entitled to more than what I have and better than what I have..."

Regardless of our circumstance, we will always have Christ, and he is enough. Like humility and trust, contentment is developed within us by the Spirit. Paul said, "*I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content,*" indicating that his contentment was taught as the Spirit applied the Word to his experiences.

The fact that contentment is learned also means that it is dependent upon grace. RC SPOUL: "*As we continue to wrestle with the desires of the flesh, we can be tempted to believe God owes us a better condition than we presently enjoy. To believe such a thing is sin, and it leads to great misery, which is overcome only by trusting in the Lord's sustaining and providential grace.*"

As we reflect on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, may we be reminded that gratitude is not a conditional virtue reserved only for seasons of temporal blessing; it is to be an ever-present characteristic of each believer. Humility prevents a spirit of entitlement, trust fosters a ready acceptance of that which comes to us from the hand of God, and contentment delights in the will of God for our lives in every circumstance.