

Thanksgiving Celebration 2020

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1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

11/22/2020

2020 has been a year for the record books. So much adversity, so little blessings. No doubt many are asking themselves... *what do I have to be Thankful for in 2020?*

I assure you there is much to be thankful for!

The Apostle Paul was a man who knew great adversity, but in its face was filled with much gratitude and praise to God for His rich blessings.

DROWNING IN ADVERSITY: 2 Corinthians 11:22-29

We find Paul's adversity throughout the 13 books/letters he authored, but in 2 Corinthians 11, we find a concentrated list of some of the ADVERSITY he faced.

Paul was used of God to plant a growing and influential church in the city of Corinth. He invested much time and physical energy into the discipleship of those believers. But in time, false teachers infiltrated the church and began to attack his genuineness as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. Over time they caused a lot of damage.

2 Corinthians was written to defend his Apostleship, the true Gospel and to help those he'd disciplined find freedom from the "gospel imposters" that were robbing them of their freedom in Christ.

The point of attack of the false apostles was centered on the ADVERSITY Paul endured. They said that his ADVERSITY was proof of God's judgement on his illegitimate ministry. Paul responded by saying that the adversity he faced was proof of his dependence on God rather than on himself.

See 2 Corinthians 11:23-29.

If anyone had the right to be in despair, angry, disillusioned, put-out and ungrateful it would be Paul. He was giving his life, every ounce of energy, for the sake of the Gospel of Christ. Surely God would treat him better than he was getting!

Yet truth is, in the midst of all his ADVERSITY Paul was a man filled with GRATITUDE and THANKSGIVING toward God.

SOARING IN GRATITUDE: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24

Despite all the ADVERSITY, Paul writes about THANKFULNESS over **50 times**, speaking often about his PRAISE to God for His many blessings

1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 is the main text for today's sermon. The entire passage is A+ material for the Christ follower, but the part I want to focus on is **VS18**.

18 Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

Be thankful... Paul says,

- ...not just when you sit down to a table laden down with more delicious food than you can eat.
- ...not just when your political candidate wins the election.
- ...not just when all of your family and friends escape the ravages of the most recent pandemic.
- ...not just when the stock market soars, and your 401K expands.

But also, when,

- ...your political candidate does not win the election.
- ...your family and friends succumb to COVID-19.
- ...the stock market tanks, and you lose the profits your recently gained.
- ...your table is not laden with delicious delicacies, but is meagerly adorned with less exciting subsistence.

WHY?

TRUTH POINT #1: It is _____ for His children to be thankful in ALL circumstances of life. Those that we find pleasant and easy and those we find unpleasant and hard.

Why?

Why is it God's will for me to be thankful in all circumstances of life?

Romans 8:28: And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.

What is God's purpose for those He calls to Himself?

Romans 8:29: For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn (the preeminent one) among many brothers and sisters.

TRUTH POINT #2: _____ comes into the life of a Christ follower that has not first filtered through the hand of God. _____ that God allows in our life is being used to mold and shape us into the image of Jesus Christ, His Son.

There is no expectation from God that we **enjoy** everything He allows in our life, no expectation that we **agree** with everything he allows, no expectation that we **prefer** everything He allows.

But knowing that everything He allows is used to fashion us into the image of Jesus, *which is the whole purpose of saving us in the first place*, shouldn't it generate a **Thankful Attitude** that God is at work transforming my life from its likeness to the form of Adam, to the likeness of the form of Jesus?

Although Paul never enjoyed being beaten, locked in prison, shipwrecked at sea or any of the other ADVERSITIES he faced, he none the less could and did maintain a grateful spirit toward God. He understood that all of the grand revelations of Divine truth, and the difficult thorn in his flesh was all part of God's transformative process in him.

HOW DO WE SEE THINGS?

- I **abhor** the idea of continual mask wearing.
- I **loathe** the words “social distancing”.
- I **chaff** under the burden of governmental mandates.
- I **despise** all of the unrest and political wrangling taking place.
- My **heart breaks** for all of the people who are suffering through isolation, fear, and anxiety.
- I am **weary** of parsing every word I write and speak to keep from alienating friends and parishioners alike who are bunkered in competing opinions on all of the above.

Yet... if I am going to be true to God’s Word, then I must recognize that all of these are being used by God to awaken me to attitudes in my life that need transformation.

WRAP UP

Today’s message is titled: **Thanksgiving In The Face Of Adversity**, because it is in the face of ADVERSITY...

- ...that God’s grace shines brightest.
- ...that transformation grows best.
- ...that we are forced to see that we are NOT the self-sufficient islands of human greatness that we often think ourselves to be.

Thanksgiving.

It is God’s will for you, for us, who belong to Christ Jesus.

The Mission Church stands ready to help you in your development as a fully functioning follower of Christ Jesus. Connect with me by email or phone.

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