

## 1 Thessalonians 5:18 “The Most Revealing Holiday on the Calendar”\*\*\*

Main Idea: Thanksgiving is the most revealing holiday in the calendar. That’s because people who give thanks are taking seriously three things the Bible says to us regarding thanksgiving.

- I. Thanksgiving is commanded (1 Thes 5:18).
  - A. It’s not occasional.
  - B. It’s not optional.
  - C. It’s not natural.
- II. Thanksgiving is required for spiritual growth.
  - A. It’s essential for overcoming anxiety (Phil 4:6-7).
  - B. It’s essential for overcoming sexual sin (Eph 5:3-4).
  - C. It’s essential for overcoming a wrong view of the things of this world (1 Tim 4:1-5).
  - D. It’s essential for overcoming idolatry (1 Cor 10:14-17).
  - E. It’s essential for overcoming discouragement in this broken world (1 Cor 15:56-57).
  - F. It’s essential for overcoming difficulties in ministry (2 Cor 2:12-14).
  - G. It’s essential for overcoming stinginess (2 Cor 9:6-7. 15).
- III. Thanksgiving is modeled .
  - A. We learn from Nehemiah (Neh 12:8, 24, 27, 31, 40, 46).
  - B. We learn from the Psalms (Ps 107:8, 15, 21, 31).
  - C. We learn ultimately from Jesus (1 Cor 11:23-24).

Take Action: Try offering the Lord three thanksgiving lists every day.

1. Thank the Lord for 10 blessings in your life.
2. Thank the Lord for 10 evidences of grace in someone else’s life.
3. Thank the Lord for 10 things that will never change.

Thanksgiving is the most revealing holiday on the calendar.

That’s just my opinion, but I think there’s biblical support. You learn a lot about a person (starting with yourself) by noting how they treat this day and experience called *thanksgiving*.

The Bible actually has a lot to say about *thanksgiving* (the word appears 25 times in the NIV). Granted, when we see the word in the Scriptures, it’s not talking about our holiday. But it is referring to the significant activity that stands behind this special day.

Now what is it about Thanksgiving that makes it so revealing? To put it simply, you can tell so much about a person’s spiritual condition by noting whether they give thanks, and for what they give thanks, and to whom they give thanks.

Start with whether they give thanks. Have you ever done something for a child, like put food on their plate, or give them a ride home from a school event, or present them with a toy, or whatever, and *not* hear the child say “thank you.” Happens all the time, doesn’t it? Children don’t naturally say “thank you.” That’s why parents need to teach them how.

Giving thanks is an indicator that a person is maturing, that he or she is growing up. And *not* giving thanks is also an indicator, for it reveals that maturing needs to occur.

Of course, it’s not just whether a person gives thanks, but *for what*. Kids are smart. *Big* kids (adults) are smart too. They quickly learn that giving thanks is the path that often leads to more good stuff. If you don’t say thanks, then you reduce your chances of getting more of the things you like.

Hence, the question, *for what?* You can tell a lot about a person by noting the things for which they express thanks. *For what* do they tell their parents, and teachers, and coaches, and ultimately, the Lord, thanks?

So if a child says *thank you* for the broccoli, and you know he doesn’t particularly care for the taste but understands you have his good health in mind, you’re probably seeing some evidence that your child is maturing.

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\*\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

And then consider *to whom* a person gives thanks. A person could give thanks, but to the wrong individual. That too is a revealer, again of immaturity, or perhaps a lack of discernment, or flat out hardness of heart. Like the Pharisee who prayed in Luke 18:11, “God, I thank you that I am not like other men.” That man said *thank you*, but he wasn’t attributing his blessings to the true God, but to himself.

So let me say it again. *Thanksgiving is the most revealing holiday on the calendar.* We learn a lot about ourselves on this day, and by what we do with the activity it represents the rest of the year.

I think the Scriptures support this premise, so let’s turn there now. I believe the *Bible* makes it clear that thanksgiving is like a spiritual thermometer that reveals the spiritual health of a person. Or to change metaphors, it’s like a growth chart on the wall that reveals the level of a person’s spiritual maturity.

Here’s what we’re going to see. People who give thanks, and that by the grace of God, are taking seriously three things the Bible says to us regarding thanksgiving.

### I. Thanksgiving is commanded (1 Thes 5:18).

Let’s turn our attention to 1 Thessalonians 5. The Spirit of God directed the apostle Paul to pen this letter to a church he had established. This was a young church that was birthed in hardship. In fact, just a short time after Paul introduced these men and women to Christ, Paul had to flee to avoid intense persecution and they were left without a spiritual father to guide them (see Acts 17:1-10).

So not long after, Paul wrote them a letter to encourage and mentor them. It’s dated around AD 51. He talks to them about a variety of subjects, chiefly, the theme of Christ’s second coming, as well as exhorting them how to live while waiting for their Savior’s return.

In chapter five he concludes the letter with a series of very practical instructions regarding how to live the Christian life. Yes, we’re saved by grace, not works, but grace works. Those who’ve come to know Christ give evidence of that saving grace in some very practical ways.

Notice verses 16–18, “Be joyful always; <sup>17</sup> pray continually; <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Let’s focus on that third charge. *Give thanks*. Paul uses the Greek verb *eucharisteo*, which means, “to express gratitude for benefits or blessings.”<sup>1</sup> It’s simply to *feel* gratitude, as in *be thankful*, but to express it. So it’s verbal. This is a call to do something with one’s mouth, to express appreciation and gratitude to the Giver when He sends benefits and blessings into the lives of His children.

Give thanks. The direction of this activity is away from self. The focus is on the Giver, particularly on His generosity. In this particular verse we learn three things about the activity of thanksgiving.

**A. It’s not occasional.** “Give thanks *in all circumstances*.” In fact, Paul uses a series of superlatives in this passage, starting in verse 16, “Be joyful *always*; <sup>17</sup> pray *continually*; <sup>18</sup> give thanks in *all* circumstances.” Always, continually, all.

For many, Thanksgiving is a very selfish holiday in which we present to God the list of things we like about life. “Thank You for these God, and I hope You’ll keep sending them.” It’s not to be so for the Christian.

In *all* circumstances, says Paul. Not *for* all circumstances. We’re not masochists. “Oh, I love this migraine! Thank You for it!” No, not *for* all circumstances, but *in* them.

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<sup>1</sup> Louw-Nida

“Thank You for what You are doing in my life right now through this pain. Thank You for how You are using it for my good and in opening up ministries to others too.”

So it’s not just occasional thanksgiving, but in all circumstances. That’s the command.

**B. It’s not optional.** “Give thanks in all circumstances, *for this is God’s will for you.*” You say, “Sometimes it doesn’t make sense to express thanks. Why should I?” Because it’s God’s will for you. We’re following in our Savior’s footsteps who Himself prayed, “Not my will, but Yours be done.”

**C. It’s not natural.** Don’t miss the final three words in verse 18, “Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you *in Christ Jesus.*” It’s not natural to verbalize thanks to the Almighty in all circumstances. In good times, yes. Anybody can do that. But when life doesn’t make sense? That’s not natural. In fact, it’s impossible. The natural man doesn’t have the power to fulfill this command of God, not in sincerity from his heart. That ability belongs only to those who are *in Christ Jesus.*

This isn’t natural. It’s supernatural. That is, it’s made possible by the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. That’s what Ephesians 5:20 says, “Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Sounds like our text in 1 Thessalonians 5, doesn’t it? But notice *giving thanks* is a participle here. It’s an activity that’s dependent on something else. What’s that? The main verb is two verses earlier, in verse 18, “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”

*Be filled with the Spirit.* That’s the main verb, followed by a series of participles that show the effect of this filling. According to verse 19, Spirit-filled people speak (lit. “are speaking”) with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and sing and make (lit. “are singing and making”) music. According to the participle in verse 21, they’re also *submitting* to one another.

Here’s the point. Giving thanks isn’t natural. We don’t do it, indeed, we can’t until the Spirit of God takes control of us. For that to happen He must first enter our lives. That occurs, according to Ephesians 1:13, when we put our faith in Christ, the One who went to the cross to rescue us from our self-absorbed, God-offending condition.

If we’ve received Christ, we have His indwelling Spirit. And if we have His Spirit, we now have the power to do what we could not do, *give thanks in all circumstances.*

So thanksgiving is commanded. That, of course, makes this activity a matter of obedience. If we fail to give thanks in all things, we are disobeying the command of God.

But why? Why does the Lord command us to give thanks? You say, “Because He deserves it!” And that’s certainly true. “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.” Yet the truth is, while the Giver deserves His thanks, *the one expressing thanks* actually benefits from giving it. How so? That brings us to our second point.

## II. Thanksgiving is required for spiritual growth.

Don’t misunderstand that word required. I don’t mean *required* in the sense of, if you don’t do it, you fall from a right standing with God. God justifies us on the basis of grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. So if you’ve put your trust in Christ and His cross-work, you’re a child of God, and can never stop being a His child.

But are you growing as His child? Are you maturing into the likeness of the firstborn Son, Jesus the Christ? For that to occur, some things are required, and thanksgiving is one of them.

In fact, thanksgiving is a prime activity in the process of spiritual growth. Indeed, it's an evidence of it. Show me a person who is not giving thanks and I'll show you someone who is not growing, and they're not growing because they are either not a believer, or not cooperating with the Spirit's intent to bring them to maturity.

Remember, our text says, "Give thanks in *all* circumstances." All means all. That's true not just when we're in a circumstance we consider to be a blessing, but also in a circumstance where change is needed.

Suppose you're struggling with a particular sin. What's needed? You say, "To get rid of the sin." And that's true. But that's only half of the process. Put off must lead to *put on*, right? According to Ephesians 4:22-24, the key to lasting, God-honoring change is replacement. We must replace the dishonoring vice with the appropriate Christlike virtue. Put off, then put on.

And specifically what must we put on? I find it very instructive that in NT text after text, dealing with sin after sin, a vital part of the necessary put on package is *thanksgiving*.

Let me give you seven examples which make it clear that thanksgiving is absolutely essential when it comes to your spiritual growth. Let's start with one that most of us battle, worry, or anxiety. Did you realize that the activity of thanksgiving is crucial if we want to kick the worrying? It is.

**A. It's essential for overcoming anxiety (Phil 4:6-7).** Take a look at Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything." There's the put off. There's no place for anxiety in the believer's life. My anxiety says I really don't believe You are in control, Lord, and that You are wise, loving, and good. Don't do that, says Paul. Don't be anxious. That's the put off.

And the put on? "But in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

So the put on involves right praying. Right praying consists of bringing our petitions and requests to God concerning the things about which we're anxious. But not just requests. What else are we to put on in our conversations with the Lord? *Thanksgiving*.

Don't miss that. Thanksgiving is part of the necessary package for overcoming anxiety. Why would that be the case? If all we do is say to ourselves, "I'm not going to worry about this situation," we haven't really overcome anything. We're still being defined by the situation, in this case, in its denial. But when we start praying and turning the situation over to the Lord, and we do so *with thanksgiving*, our whole perspective has changed.

When we thank the Lord, we're acknowledging His goodness to us and His sovereign control over our lives. It will sound something like this. "Father, as You know I'm feeling anxious right now about the biopsy report, but I want to turn this over to You. I ask that You use my health situation to glorify Yourself, to teach me and others looking at me how sufficient Christ is. And right now, by faith, I thank You that You will do this, whether You choose to heal me or not. You will work this for my good. Thank You!"

Now if we do this, if we pray like this, *with thanksgiving*, what will we experience? Paul says that the peace of God will do something for us. What's that? It will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. There are those three words again. *In Christ Jesus*. Only those who are in Christ can experience the mind-guarding ministry of the peace of God, but that's exactly what they do experience, when they turn their anxiety into prayer requests with thanksgiving.

Let's look at another example. We've seen how thanksgiving is essential for overcoming anxiety. The same goes for sexual sin.

**B. It's essential for overcoming sexual sin (Eph 5:3-4).** Listen to Ephesians 5:3-4, "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. <sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving."

This text is actually right in the middle of the put off/put on instruction the apostle Paul is giving the church. It starts back in 4:17 and runs through 5:18. If we're in Christ, we're not to live as we used to and as the world still does. We're to put off the old ways of thinking and behaving, and put on new ways of thinking and behaving (4:22-24).

It's called progressive sanctification. Every day we need to put off and put on. In what areas? In whatever area in which we presently do not resemble Christ.

Paul gives a series of examples. If we have a deceitful tongue, we need to put off falsehood and put on speaking the truth (25). If we have an anger problem, we need to put off letting the sun go down on our wrath and put on using the emotion generated by our anger to deal with our problems in God-honoring ways (26-27).

If we've been takers instead of givers, we need to put off our stealing and get a job, provide for our own needs, and start helping others in need (28). If unwholesome speech is our problem, then we need to put it off and put on speech that builds others up (29). If we've been carrying around bitterness, rage, and slander, we need to put it off and replace it with kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.

In every sin the pattern is the same. We must put off, then put on.

The very next category of sin that Paul addresses is sexual sin. How do we overcome sexual sin? It starts, not surprisingly, with putting off some things. We're told in 5:3, "There must not be even a hint of" six things. First, *sexual immorality, impurity, greed*. Why get rid of these? Because we are holy people, and these are improper for us. Then *obscenity, foolish talk, and coarse joking*. These also must be put off. Why? Because they're out of place.

I think all six of these have to do with sexual sin, the act of it, the desire for it, and the talk about it. Every trace of it we must put off. It's not on our television sets, or in our music, or in our jokes, or on our computer screens. When it comes to overcoming sexual sin, the first thing we do, and we keep doing, is put it off.

But again, it's just the first thing, not the final thing. A thief who merely stops stealing is just a thief between jobs. He hasn't really changed until he puts on a good job, starts saving, and starts being a giver instead of a taker.

So with the man who struggles with pornography. Or the woman who moves from one illicit relationship to another. Or the teen who has a filthy mouth. Can they change? If they know Christ. And if they do, they must both put off the sexual sin, and then put on something in its place.

What's that? Verse 4—*but rather thanksgiving*. If I want to overcome sexual sin, I must learn to give thanks. Give thanks to whom? To the Lord. For what? In this context, for the gift of sex as He intended it.

You see, sex is a wonderful gift from the Lord to be enjoyed by a husband and wife in the covenant of marriage. And so, the overcomer will express that. "Thank You, Lord, for my spouse, and for what You have given me in this person. Thank you for the privilege of being a giver and meeting his/her physical needs. I used to be a taker, and still would be had You not set me free in Christ, free to serve."

What if the person is single? He or she also needs to put on thanksgiving. "Thank You, Lord, for my singleness. According to 1 Corinthians 7, You have given me a valuable platform for serving in Your kingdom because I'm now single. Thank You. And also, thank You for the spouse You may have in store for me, and if so, the

enjoyment in the gift of sex as You intended. And if not, for Your sufficiency for my every need now as a single. I give You thanks.”

You see, thanksgiving is essential for overcoming sexual sin. Indeed, if you’re not expressing thanks to the Lord for your spouse, or for your position if you’re single, and for all His other blessings, you’re in a very vulnerable place.

Sexual sin is actually, at its root, a worship sin. According to Romans 1, it’s the case of worshipping a creature (whether a creature on a computer screen or a living person) rather than the Creator. So the solution for sexual sin isn’t just to stop violating the creature, that’s a given. We must also then start worshipping the Creator, by celebrating the gift of eternal life in His Son.

So if you want to overcome the sin of anxiety, you must, by God’s grace, make giving thanks an important part of your life. The same goes for overcoming sexual sin. That’s not all. Here’s another example.

**C. It’s essential for overcoming a wrong view of the things of this world (1 Tim 4:1-5).** In 1 Timothy Paul is giving his associate, Timothy, counsel on how to help the church he was shepherding in Ephesus. Apparently, there were some teachers who were spreading some very God-defying notions to the flock. So in chapter 4 Paul tells Timothy how to deal with these teachers and their heresy.

Listen to 1 Timothy 4:1–5, and notice how Paul mentions thanksgiving twice: “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.<sup>2</sup> Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.<sup>3</sup> They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with *thanksgiving* by those who believe and who know the truth.<sup>4</sup> For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with *thanksgiving*,<sup>5</sup> because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.”

Apparently, the false teachers were promoting asceticism as the highest form of spirituality. If you want to be really spiritual, you must deny yourself the normal flesh and bone experiences. You don’t get married. You don’t eat certain foods. Anything material is bad.

Sounds like some religious systems in our world today, doesn’t it? Don’t drink coffee or tea. Stay celibate. Don’t eat beef. You can’t be godly if you do.

What’s Paul think about such notions? According to these God-inspired words, he says those teachings are demonic and come from hypocritical liars whose consciences are seared. Not a very flattering description!

So how should we treat the material things of life? Paul says that what God has created is good, and we should receive them. How? With *thanksgiving*. Twice he says *with thanksgiving*.

Perhaps you’ve come out of a background in which you lived for the physical stuff of this world and went for the gusto in every sensual experience imaginable. That’s *not* the person Paul’s talking about here (although he addresses that person elsewhere, as in Ephesians 4:17-24). Here he’s talking to those of us who struggle with a tarnished view of the material world, those who tend to define godliness in terms of what they *don’t* do.

So there’s the libertine and the legalist. Actually, they both have something in common. In both cases, there’s a wrong view of the things of this world. And in both cases, the solution involves the same activity. *Thanksgiving*.

If we’re going to overcome our sensuality *or* our asceticism, we must learn to express thanks to the Lord for what He has made, and for the purpose for which He made them.

Here’s another example where thanksgiving is required.

**D. It's essential for overcoming idolatry (1 Cor 10:14-17).** Listen to 1 Corinthians 10:14–17, “Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. <sup>15</sup> I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. <sup>16</sup> Is not the cup of **thanksgiving** for which we **give thanks** a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup> Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”

What's the solution for idolatry? Verse says, “Flee from it.” There's the *put off* again. But a person who merely stops bowing before idols hasn't really changed (and keep in mind that an idol can be a stone image of a deity, or something else you're worshipping in your life, like a job, or a child, or a car). To overcome idolatry, you must flee from it, yes, you must reject false worship.

But then comes the *put on*. What's needed? Become a true worshipper. And what does the true worshipper do? He gives thanks for the cup of thanksgiving, says Paul. What's that mean? It means he participates in the communion service, but not just ritually. He actually *gives thanks* to the Lord for what it represents, for the cleansing from sin he enjoys because of the shed blood of Christ.

Are you thankful for Christ's shed blood? Do you make the communion service a priority on your schedule so you can tell Him?

Here's another example of how indispensable thanksgiving is.

**E. It's essential for overcoming discouragement in this broken world (1 Cor 15:56-57).** In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul addresses the subject of the coming resurrection. Some say this life is all there is. Not so, says Paul. This body is going to die, and one day, in you're in Christ, be raised from the dead and transformed into a glorified body. He sums up the argument at the end of the chapter.

Notice verse 56, “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.” Friends, we're living in a broken world. Our bodies are breaking down. Relationships often break down. Society is breaking down. We cannot escape the realities of the sting of death and the power of sin. They're all around us.

So how do we overcome the discouragement that so naturally accompanies life in this broken world? Here's the answer, verse 57, “But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Listen to what James Boice had to say in his commentary (By the way, keep in mind that Pastor Boice practiced what he preached when he himself died of liver cancer at the age of 61), “Perhaps cancer or some other debilitating disease has invaded your body, and you suspect that you do not have a very long time to live. ‘What a waste,’ you are saying. ‘Why can't I be strong and healthy and live a long, long life?’ I do not know the answer to that. What God does with us in detail is not revealed in Scripture. It is one of the secret things that belong to God only. But that does not mean the painful path he calls you to walk has no purpose. It is how you conduct yourself in such ‘wasting times’ that is the stuff of victory... Set an example for us by lifting your eyes from what is material and tangible and passing away, and point us to him who is invisible and who does everything well. Show us how light and momentary these earthly troubles are. We need to know that. Show us how they are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”<sup>2</sup>

The point is this. People who overcome discouragement in this broken world don't just *believe* the doctrine of the coming resurrection. They *give thanks* to God for it and then live in light of it.

For the sake of time, I'll just mention two more examples. Sixthly...

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<sup>2</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, 1993), III:1447

**F. It's essential for overcoming difficulties in ministry (2 Cor 2:12-14).** We don't have time to recreate the context, but suffice it to say Paul was very discouraged in the situation he describes in 2 Corinthians 2:12–13, “Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, <sup>13</sup> I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia.”

Ministry is like that sometimes, lonely, frustrating, uncertain. So what do you do to be an overcomer? Here's what Paul did, and calls on us to do. Verse 14, “But *thanks be to God*, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.”

Right now, Jesus Christ is making Himself known to the world through His people, and He's using their weaknesses and hardships to accomplish it. So thank Him for what He's doing. Thank Him that He is leading you in a triumphal procession.

One more example...

**G. It's essential for overcoming stinginess (2 Cor 9:6-7. 15).** In 2 Corinthians 9 Paul talks to the Corinthian church about giving, and offers this counsel in verses 6–7, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup> Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Notice, not reluctantly, but cheerfully. By nature, we don't want to part with what we have. What's a part of the process of learning to be a cheerful giver? You've got it. *Thanksgiving*. Notice verse 15, “Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!” As we take time to express thanks to the Lord for His gift, His *indescribable* gift, it does something to us, namely, inspires us to be joyful givers like Him.

So thanksgiving is not only commanded, but required. If you want to grow as a Christian, if you want to overcome sin and mature in Christlikeness, you must give careful attention to this activity, giving thanks.

Now you see why Thanksgiving is such a revealing holiday? If this activity isn't happening, God is being robbed, and we're not going to grow spiritually. That's why I want to give you a practical assignment in a moment, but first, I want to mention this.

### III. Thanksgiving is modeled.

In next week's sermon we're going to look at the helpful model of a thanks-expressing man named Paul. But I want to show you three right now.

**A. We learn from Nehemiah (Neh 12:8, 24, 27, 31, 40, 46).** Nehemiah not only gave thanks, but used his leadership position to mobilize a nation to do the same.

Nehemiah 12:8 “The Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and also Mattaniah, who, together with his associates, *was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving.*”

Nehemiah 12:24 “And the leaders of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, Jeshua son of Kadmiel, and their associates, who stood opposite them *to give praise and thanksgiving*, one section responding to the other, as prescribed by David the man of God.”

Nehemiah 12:27 “At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with *songs of thanksgiving* and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres.”

Nehemiah 12:31 “I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned *two large choirs to give thanks*. One was to proceed on top of the wall to the right, toward the Dung Gate.”



Nehemiah 12:40 “The *two choirs that gave thanks* then took their places in the house of God; so did I, together with half the officials...”

Nehemiah 12:46 “For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there had been *directors for the singers and for the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.*”

**B. We learn from the Psalms (Ps 107:8, 15, 21, 31).** Psalm 107 is a teaching psalm. It shows people who’ve benefitting from God’s saving grace how to respond.

Psalm 107:8 “*Let them give thanks to the LORD* for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men.” [repeated verbatim in 15, 21, 31]

**C. We learn ultimately from Jesus (1 Cor 11:23-24).** There’s something very important that stood out to Paul about Jesus that’s mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11. A very familiar text, we use it at communion frequently. But notice the activity that our Lord entered into on the night He pondered His coming crucifixion. Verses 11:23–24, “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> *and when he had given thanks*, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’”

What did our Savior do as He contemplated the agony of the cross, and as He prepared to give His disciples a memorial of it? He *gave thanks*.

So thanksgiving is commanded, required, and modeled. So let’s take action.

Take Action: Try offering the Lord three thanksgiving lists every day.

1. *Thank the Lord for 10 blessings in your life.* Thank You Father for the variety of good food You’ve given us today, and for a caring wife who prepared it. Thank You that our children have their own homes, with jobs, and all their needs met. Thank You for a loving church family. Thank You for eyes that can see my Bible right now, and for ears that can hear the fellowship we’re enjoying, and for a mouth that can sing to You.

Ten blessings. Ten things you appreciate that the Lord has sent into your life. But don’t stop there. Move to a second list.

2. *Thank the Lord for 10 evidences of grace in someone else’s life.* Thank You, Father, for giving Dennis strength to model Your unconditional love in caring for his mother at the hospital. Thank You for giving Fox the opportunity to joyfully care for her mother at the care center. Thank You for evidence of Your grace in the Cook family as they’ve faced a series of hardships, most recently Bella’s serious infection. Thank You for Your grace that’s enabling several families to open their homes for our deacon care group fellowships today. Thank You for giving Dan Edwards grace to come at 5:00 in the morning on Fridays to clean our church facility. Thank You for the compassion I saw in Logan’s eyes this week as I watched him care for his wife battling cancer. Thank You for giving his wife, Kay, grace to ask about how my wife is doing in her recovery, even though she herself is so weak.

These are all evidences of God’s grace, and whenever we such evidences, we should give thanks to the Giver. And thirdly...

3. *Thank the Lord for 10 things that will never change.* For instance, thank You, Lord Jesus, for interceding for me in heaven when I feel down. Thank You, Holy Spirit, for Your convicting ministry when I have sin. Thank You, Father, for Your peace. Thank You for the Bible, for the unfailing mission of the church, for a home reserved in heaven, and most of all, for Your grace that makes it all possible.