

Rejoice in the Lord: Grateful

Day 1

Understanding Thankfulness and Gratitude

Check out this great article on Christian thankfulness to get our week of gratitude off to a good start:

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/christian-thankfulness-what-it-is-and-isnt>

Verses: Romans 11:36, Colossians 1:16, 1 Corinthians 4:7

Prayer Topics: Perspective, Attitude, Joy

Day 2

Discipline & Gratitude

In yesterday's devotional, I linked to an article that talked about thankfulness as a spontaneous emotion. For some, this might have raised a few questions. If thankfulness is a spontaneous emotion, then surely I have no control over it and cannot be commanded to have it. The truth is that the bible commands us to have certain emotions about certain things. This seems strange to our modern ears, but the bible is not shy about commanding even our joy. First, let's determine if thankfulness really is a spontaneous emotion. Let's imagine that on Christmas day you have sacrificed to get your kids toys and gifts that you know will be a blessing to their life, and you also know that these gifts are capable of increasing their joy and happiness. If your kid opens the gift and you see the disappointment or discontentment on their face as they give an obligatory, "thank you", you will probably not feel like true gratitude or thankfulness was on display. They may have said their thanks, but they did not feel it. In this way, it is clear that thankfulness is a spontaneous feeling, and that when it is not a feeling or not spontaneous, something is missing from its perfected state. This illustration also helps us to understand how thankfulness can be commanded, even though it is a feeling that should come spontaneously. If the child did not see the gloriousness of the gift because they are looking for another gift instead, if they do not trust the parent to give good gifts, that may be beyond their current understanding, or if they currently lack the wisdom necessary to discern the situation properly, then these things

must be remedied so that the emotion can spontaneously arise. While the child, or any of us for that matter, might be incapable of conjuring a spontaneous emotion with integrity, we can work on removing the impediments to that emotion arising spontaneously. We can work on building trust, on becoming more discerning, and on not having our eyes so fixed on the things we want that we miss the glory of receiving unexpected gifts. How do we begin this process? Check out this article for some ideas:

<https://estherpress.com/christian-gratitude-its-our-choice-to-make/>

Verses: 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Psalm 118:24, James 1:17

Prayer Topics: Preparation, Expectations, Contentment

Day 3

Being Content

If we are to be thankful, we must first learn contentment. Check out this article to get started:

<https://learn.ligonier.org/articles/learning-contentment>

Verses: 1 Timothy 6:6, Romans 12:1–2, Philippians 4:11

Prayer Topics: Peace, Submission, Excitement

Day 4

Thanksgiving

Most of us find that there are many times in our lives where we struggle to be obedient to God's commands in scripture to give thanks and show gratitude. This command does not always seem to fit our circumstances, at least as we see them. In addition, even when it might fit our circumstances, it doesn't always fit our mood. The fact that God commands these things seems petty and controlling to many, and it makes them struggle with the character and nature of God. How can we understand the nature of these commands and the character of God that it reveals? First, the reason that we struggle with God commanding gratitude and thanksgiving is because we recognize our emotions as authoritative and we find it unseemly that God doesn't recognize their authority as we do. If there is a contest in power, authority, and virtue

between our emotions and God, who wins? Does God have the right, as the Lord of heaven and earth and the creator and sustainer of all things, to contradict our emotions? Does God have the right? Next, we might ask ourselves if it is self serving of God to give us such a command. To investigate this, let us look closely at what he is asking us to do. What are thanksgiving and gratitude? The command to give thanks is the command to celebrate that which is worthy of celebration. God is always giving us life, giving us himself, giving us air, food, water. God is calling us not to overlook the myriad and excellent gifts that he is giving us all the time, and he is inviting us to celebrate these gifts. The invitation to thanksgiving is the invitation to the ongoing party that celebrates the glory of God seen in his goodness to his creation. Sometimes we get invited to parties and it sounds really fun when we receive the invitation, but when it comes time to actually go to the party we are tired or not in the mood. If we force ourselves to go, we will find that we are soon enjoying the party, and that our emotions have this tendency to be easily led in one direction or another, so if we take the time to lead them toward celebration they will follow. God knows this, and invites us to the party that is based on the truth of his everlasting love and blessing of his creation. Why not accept the invitation? To learn more about thanksgiving, check out the article below:

<https://www.first15.org/devotionals/encountering-god-through-thanksgiving-2023/>

Verses: Psalm 92:1–5, Romans 12:9, 2 Corinthians 10:5

Prayer Topics: Gratitude, Praise, Grace

Day 5

Thanks to Sylvester Warsaw, Jr for our devotional today

In 2 Cor. 10:3-6, Paul tells us that those who follow Christ Jesus weapons of warfare aren't weapons designed after the flesh whose purpose is to kill and not redeem. The unfortunate reality many claiming to love Jesus when hearing about the persecution of

Christians being persecuted the immediate prayer is for the protection and rescue of the Christians and for vengeance against the ones persecuting. Matthew 5:43-45 record these words, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that they may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." This passage clearly tells

us that God is interested in all humanity and not just a particular people group, 2 Peter 3:5. God is interested in redemption not our feelings.

The depth of your relationship with God will determine your response under real persecution because what the institutional church is experiencing now isn't persecution but accountability. The church was created for redemption and not conformity to this world order. When you choose to adapt and conform to this world order there's no rejoicing in all things because there's no room for redemption. Only daily intentionally walking with God in and through Christ Jesus can you by faith understand the weight of redemption and its creative power.

Acts 5:40-42 talks about the mindset of Peter and the other apostles who were beaten for the preaching of the cross when the Sadducees had strictly warned and forbade them not to teach the name of Jesus. Instead of the apostles complaining about being beaten they rejoiced because they were counted worthy to suffer for His name. Will you and I count ourselves worthy when the time comes for the church in America to face real persecution and persecution is no longer in distant lands but on the doorstep?