

## GIVING THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES 1 THESSALONIANS

In this letter to the Thessalonians Paul was addressing real issues with the Thessalonians – their morality, their love for one another, their fears. But he expresses himself in a spirit of thankfulness.

*We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers.*

1 Thessalonians 1:2

*And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.*

1 Thessalonians 2:13

*For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God*

1 Thessalonians 3:9

*Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

- Are you able to give thanks in all circumstances?

If you look closely you'll see that Paul is not telling you to be thankful for troubling circumstances; rather we are to be thankful in our circumstances. There is a major difference between being thankful for every situation in life and being thankful in those situations.

- Is it possible to be thankful while depressed?
- How can we develop a spirit of thankfulness?

Being thankful in all circumstances requires consistent listening to God's promises and looking for God's goodness toward our lives. Maybe our attention is turned inward on ourselves. We grumble and complain.

Lately I've been realizing how much I've been complaining. You've heard me talk much about my tremors. Not a day goes by that I don't complain about it. But too often I forget about thanking God for how well I now am emotionally. I've been pretty well stable for six months now! Why don't I focus more on those things I am thankful for? I have so much.

Complaining is a symptom of an unthankful heart. It isn't the product of a deprived life. Giving a child everything he wants results in an ungrateful child. He feels he's entitled to everything and wants more. He's never satisfied – never happy.

Thankfulness isn't the result of having a lot. Christians in Uganda are thankful for the smallest kindness, and they sing with a joy that would put our singing to shame. It flows from a heart that sees and hear God's goodness. They are listening to God's promises.

We need to hear promises like:

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

Romans 8:28

#### DOES THAT MEAN WE CAN'T BE HONEST ABOUT OUR PROBLEMS?

- Does that mean we should never tell a friend when something is wrong with us or bothering us?
- Does that mean we can't share our problems here at Living Room?

To have close relationships with friends we need to be able to share honestly. If we're not authentic our friendships will be plastic. We shouldn't be afraid to say something about a deep concern or problem. Living Room will only be helpful if we can be honest about what we are going through. We trust in God's presence and bring everything to Him in prayer.

I have a friend who tells me the problems she's having but invariably will end by saying "But God is good." It's a bit like how David wrote his psalms isn't it? Look at Psalm 13 for example. He's obviously in a desperate state and complaining to God. And yet he ends with:

*But I trust in your unfailing love;  
my heart rejoices in your salvation.  
I will sing to the Lord,  
for he has been good to me.*

Expect the good, expect blessings. Look for what is good and you will find it. There's a huge benefit to having a grateful spirit. It brings joy and helps keep depression at bay.