

Question: The Bible not only says “Give thanks,” but it says to do so “always” and in “everything” (Ephesians 5:20). Is that possible? How can we always be thankful in everything?

The biblical instructions to be “always giving thanks to God the Father for everything” (Eph 5:20 NIV) sound impossible. When we feel pain, we don’t typically squeal with joy and say, “Thank you Lord.” If we lose a job, we don’t burst into song. If we hit a finger with a hammer, we don’t shout “Hallelujah!” But there are ways of reframing our situation in life that can help us to always be thankful in all things.

Some people are able to be thankful in difficult times simply because they can see a way that things could be worse. Matthew Henry was a writer of Bible commentaries in the 1800’s. After being robbed one day, Henry wrote in his journal, “Let me be thankful, first, because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because, although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.”

In a similar vein, the Job of the Bible responded to his suffering by saying, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised” (Job 1:21). Even in the midst of great loss, Job was able to be thankful for what he had received and enjoyed most of his life. He might have said, “It is better to have been blessed and lost, than to never have been blessed.” But not everyone is willing to view life with that attitude.

Although the Psalms of David are filled with thanksgiving, his life was not devoid of trials and hardships. On one occasion, he felt he was sinking deep in a miry pit and life was tragically coming to an end. But when he cried out to the Lord, he was rescued. David wrote: “I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God” (Psalm 40:1-3). Indeed, it was the experience of having been rescued from the pit that made him thankful. Without the pit, there would have been no rescue. It may take a long spell of dark and cloudy days to make us appreciate the sun.

Also, we may not appreciate the rain until after a long, dry time. Through faith in God, thanksgiving is possible in all circumstances of life.

The key to the apostle Paul's thankfulness is found in this: "What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:31-32). The gift of God's Son to set us free from the guilt and power of sin with their tragic effects is the assurance that God will take care of all the other things in life. The gift of God's son assures us that there is nothing we can face in life that our Lord cannot and will not help us handle.

Therefore, we can always be thankful in everything. This is not to say it is easy. Our faith may not have arrived at that point yet. But trust in Jesus Christ and you will be on the right road to a thankful heart and a blessed life. Perhaps you need to start by learning more about the Christ and how to become one of his followers. I would be glad to help you at anytime.

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