

A COMMITMENT TO BE THANKFUL

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9

Philippians 4:4-9 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. 5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Introduction

I am trying something new this year. Instead of having one message for the Thanksgiving holiday, I am going to preach two sermons. This message will deal with the idea of living our lives in a Commitment to be Thankful. Next week we will look at Giving Thanks and Remembering.

Words like commitment and obedience are difficult concepts for most people. I find that most folks want others to be committed to them in their friendships, and want obedience from those that report to them. But I find that the opposite feelings are found when the “shoe is on the other foot.”

I want to be the first one to admit that it is not a simple task to be thankful in every situation. As a matter of fact, I would have some serious concerns over someone that is excited that their house was destroyed in a fire and they lost everything. So what is the Apostle telling the church at Philippi?

Dr. Dale Robbins writes, “I used to think people complained because they had a lot of problems. But I have come to realize that they have problems because they complain. Complaining doesn’t change anything or make situations better. It amplifies frustration, spreads discontent and discord, and can invoke an invitation for the devil to cause havoc with our lives.”

Complaining makes us miserable and difficult to be around.

Psalm 77:3 says, “I complained and my spirit was overwhelmed.” (KJV)

Philippians 2:14 “Do all things without grumbling or disputing, 15that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world”

The Psalmist and the Apostle Paul are encouraging the reader to be a positive, thankful person for their witness is important in this dark world. We can only shine “as lights in the world” when we live and express thanksgiving!

Instead of looking at the negatives in our lives and complaining, we must look at and for the positives and give thanks.

Philippians 4:4-9 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice

Paul uses the Greek word *chairō* with its meaning of “be full of joy, be exceedingly glad.” And what are we to be full of joy and exceedingly glad about? “In the Lord!” We are to be full of joy and be exceedingly glad in the Lord continuously.

The Apostle Paul has used this theme elsewhere in his writings:

Colossians 1:11 11May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,

24Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,

Colossians 2:5For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

In this verse, Paul repeats himself to ensure that the readers share in his thoughts; “Rejoice, Rejoice!” *Psalms 9:2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.*

5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;

Let your reasonableness be known to everyone – The word “reasonableness” is defined as gentleness. Therefore, the Apostle is saying that if you do not grumble and complain, others will see your response to situations in life and they will see your gentleness. It refers to showing consideration to one another, setting aside your situation and placing others before you. Paul urges the Philippians to show their “gentleness” to everyone, believers and unbelievers alike. The reason we are to “rejoice and show gentleness to others is because the “Lord is at hand.” If others see you complaining and are not kind to others, then they will not be able to see that the Lord is in your life...He is not at hand to you.

6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

...do not be anxious about anything – If we are “committed to be thankful”, then to be troubled with the cares of this world reveals to the world that God is not able to care for you. That is the message those around you will see. A second definition concerning be anxious means to “promote one’s interests ahead of others.” I have found that complainers and grumblers’ focus is on themselves and are more concerned about their condition, shutting everyone else out.

...but in everything by prayer and supplication- There is a reason that the Apostle separates prayer and supplication. Paul declares that the way to overcome being anxious is to be in prayer about everything. I am amused at the number of times I have worried myself sick over an issue and finally, I go to the Lord to ask for help. If I was always communing with the Lord, then He would be the first person I talk to about the issue. We would have a great time discussing my anxiousness and it would turn out to be something easy for the Lord to take off my plate.

Supplication is act of requesting, through prayer, to God. Where prayer is the communing with the Lord, supplication is the petitioning or requesting things from God.

...with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God – The manner in which we approach God says a lot about our relationship with the Father. I am sure that you have seen children demand things from their parents in stores. They proclaim “I Want” and then demand the appropriate response from the parents. Children shouting and crying, pouting, laying on the ground kicking their feet all in an effort to get what they want.

Paul says the way we approach God should be with hearts of thanksgiving and not with a spirit of selfishness that demands God to respond. I wonder how many of our prayers to the Creator are more like the child throwing a tantrum. “Not me” you might respond. But Paul says we are to approach God without worry, staying in communion with Him, asking our petitions with a heart built around being thankful. I wonder how many times this week I have gone straight to the supplication time in prayer, rather than being thankful segment of my prayer time.

7And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Paul instructs the believers in Philippi an important lesson. The way they live their lives in this world can bring worry and agitation or it can bring the peace of God. The way we respond to the demands

on planet earth is like a giant billboard for all of our family, friends, and strangers to see. What will they see in us?

Throughout my life an important lesson has been driven home to me. “We cannot control many of the issues and events in our lives, but we can control how we respond and approach them.”

I would sure like to have more of the “peace of God” in my life. How about you? Paul says that His peace is far greater than our understanding. Peterson writes:

Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It’s wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.¹

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Paul now sums up what he is trying to get across. “Tell them. Tell them what you told them. Tell them again.” That is the motto for anyone who teaches. To get the point across, you must repeat the message until it takes hold and bears fruit.

Instead of being anxious and filled with worry, focus on the truths of God, those things that God has given you and He honored all of His promises. Center your concerns on God being Just and Pure. Concentrate on those blessing that the Lord has given, those things that are lovely and worth telling others about. And as you mine the attributes and promises of the Lord, search out those things that are above what man can produce and you will find plenty of things to praise the Lord about. These are the things we should fill our mind with.

9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul now moves from the theoretical to the practical. I have told you, but I have also shown you. And those things that I have spoken and lived my life through, practice them and when you do, the peace of God will replace the cares of the world.

¹ Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language* (Php 4:6–7). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

I would like to conclude with these thoughts

I read a sermon this week concerning Thanksgiving. He boiled thanksgiving down to three simple thoughts.

1- We have it so good

2- We enjoy it so much

3- We express it so little

Some years ago, the cartoon pictured Charlie Brown bringing out Snoopy's dinner on Thanksgiving Day. But it was just his usual dog food in a bowl.

Snoopy took one look at the dog food and said, "This isn't fair. The rest of the world today is eating turkey with all the trimmings and all I get is dog food. Because I'm a dog," he said, "all I get is dog food." He stood there and stared at his dog food for a moment and said, "I guess it could be worse. I could be a turkey."

I would say that starting today, whenever we think life is unfair to us, we need to re-center our thinking. We need to concentrate on God and remove our focus of ourselves.

Conclusion

"Count your blessings, name them one by one. Count your blessings see what God has done. Count your many blessings. See what God has done. Count your many blessings see what God has done." I love that hymn. Basically the hymn writer says, "Instead of thinking about how little we have, we need to count up what we do have and give thanks!"

This is Thanksgiving week. Perhaps we should begin a new tradition and begin making a commitment to be thankful?

You can simply begin by saying, "I am Thankful for _____!" and fill in the blank. Let me give you some ideas.

....the taxes I pay because it means I'm employed.

....the clothes that fit a little too snug because it means I have enough to eat.

....my shadow who watches me work because it means I am out in the sunshine.

....a lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning and gutters that need fixing because it means I have a home.

....the spot I find at the far end of the parking lot because it means I am capable of walking.

....my huge heating bill because it means I am warm.

....all the complaining I hear about our government because it means we have freedom of speech.

....the lady behind me in church who sings off key because it means that I can hear.

....the piles of laundry and ironing because it means my loved ones are nearby.

....the weariness and aching muscles at the end of the day because it means I have been productive.

I believe this task will get easier as we make a Commitment to be Thankful. Seriously, we came into this world with nothing but the eternal soul that God gave us. Everything else is profit. We can never give too much thanks to God!

We have it so good. We enjoy it so much. And often, we express it so little.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Ephesians 5:20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Bob Crowder