

REMEMBERING THINGS

How To Be Thankful

Introduction: Have you ever helped someone who did not like the help because it was not what they wanted? Our Society has a spirit of ingratitude, which affects our spiritual life. Somehow, we think God owes us a problem free life. Problems are to help us grow.

When you begin to focus on problems and you try to get God to help you solve your problems, you have developed a “self-centered” life. You have become the center of attention instead of God’s Word and His will. You become bitter, start to complain, and are not thankful. 1 Thess. *deals with how to do the work of ministry in these last days*. The focus of ministry is on the Word of God to others instead of our problems. This text helps us know how to have a thankful heart. We do this by remembering things.

Paul begins this passage with “**we give thanks to God.**” If you look in Acts 17, you will find the account of the beginning of the church in Thessalonica. It was difficult. Some people in the city that wanted Paul out and to make his life miserable. If most of us suffered what Paul did in Thessalonica, we would become bitter – instead of thankful. Paul looked beyond his own problems and hardships to see what God was doing. **When we focus on what God does instead of our own problems, we become thankful.**

When you focus outward and seek to meet the needs of others, you become thankful. Focus on what God is doing in the lives of others is a key to thankfulness. You focus either inward or outward. You either serve self or others. **YOU NEED TO LOOK AT WHAT GOD HAS DONE.**

There are three ways God develops thankfulness in Paul. God does it the same way in our lives. They are:

- I. **PAUL RECOGNIZED THE NEED TO PRAY FOR THOSE TO WHOM HE MINISTERED 1 Thess. 1:2.** Ministry to others becomes exasperating. When our prayers are focused on our needs – *Oh God I need this – I need that* – we become bitter and unthankful, instead of praying for them. Pray for those to whom you minister.
- II. **PAUL REMEMBERED TO BE THANKFUL 1 Thess. 1:3.** He not only prayed for them he remembered – he saw what God had done. I look at you now and remember what God has done. Every day you wake up you are going to have problems and needs – you have a choice to make. Will I focus on MY problems or on what God has done? There are three ways Paul was thankful. When you work with people, you will want to look at these three things. There are some special *trinities* in the Bible. **1 Cor. 13 – faith, hope, love, Col. 1:4-5.** These three pop up everywhere.

III. PAUL REFLECTED ON GOD’S PURPOSE, 1 Thess. 1:4. When we come to the word “*election*” all types of thoughts emerge. There are five passages where we find the word *election*.

Acts 9:15 has to do with God’s plan/purpose for his life.

Rom. 9:11-12, the context is the nation of Israel (Jacob and Esau).

Rom. 11:5,7, Israel has not yet completed God’s purpose.

Rom. 11:28, God’s purpose with Israel.

2 Peter 1:10, God accomplishing His purpose for your life and you participating in that. Paul is saying, I know God’s purpose for the Thessalonians and he (Paul) is thankful. You can look at your problems, gripe, and complain, or you can look at what God is doing and begin to be conformed to the image of God – you must focus outward instead of inward.

- A. Paul was thankful for their “work of faith.”** Did you ever think that “faith” was a work? **Heb. 11:1, the substance of faith.** In Heb. 11, faith is always connected with “action” verbs. **Through faith Abel offered... Abraham obeyed....** Do not tell me what you believe – show me what you believe. **Mark 2:4-5**, the men bringing their friend who was sick, **when Jesus saw their faith.** Can anyone see your faith? Faith is a work.
- B. Paul was thankful for their “labor of love.”** Love is not automatic. If you love someone you have to work at it. We use the word love so cheaply – *I just love you in the Lord.* Jesus Christ did a labor of love on the cross – He died for us! When you begin to see the “work of faith” and “labor of love” you become thankful. **1 Peter 1:22.** Do you know what Peter said? We just can’t seem to get along with each other – we have a personality conflict – we roll up our sleeves and work at it. Love does not depend on the person you love it depends on your labor – a commitment from you. If you truly love someone, it makes no difference what that person says or does.
- C. Paul was thankful for their patience of hope. 1 Peter 1:3-9.** Note the context. The reason you can take temptation and trials is because what you wait for – the greatness of what God has for us. Some say, “Well, I just don’t have patience.” You don’t understand what you have waiting for you.