

## Cultivating Gratitude in the Midst of the Hard Work of Education – Rom 1:18-23, 1 Thess 5:16-18

**Introduction** – Another school-year begins and how are you feeling about it? Are you thankful? Do you remember why you are doing this? Children? Parents? Teachers? Has the excitement over the newness of recovering Christian education dulled a bit in the midst of the work, the sacrifice, the cost?

**Refusing to Give Thanks** (Rom 1:18-23) – Men forget God and suppress His truth under temptations great and small. In fact, this is a problem as old as the Garden. Although His attributes in all subjects of the created world are evident (v19), we are tempted not to glorify God and we are tempted not to give thanks (v21). Focus on that second issue: “*nor were thankful*.”

**Our Problem** – We read this passage and think we are beyond it because it is talking about those who have rejected God and we haven’t. In fact, we think of ourselves as so committed to God because we are actively obeying Him with regard to the training of our children (Eph 6:4). However, we must also guard ourselves from doing so with ungrateful hearts, even with regard to the task at hand. If we do not, we are acting like the unbelievers, doing the very thing that causes futile thinking and foolish hearts to be darkened.

**The Many Temptations** – This list is far from exhaustive, but it’s a good start. We are tempted to be ungrateful with regard to the hard work of education because...

**It Is Still So Far from Perfect** – We want instant results. We want to recover and rebuild what we have spent many generations destroying. Remember Phil 3:12-14.

**It Is So Hard** – and it makes us really tired. We will grow tired, but we must not grow weary in doing good. Remember Gal 6:9.

**It Is So Difficult** – God made the world in such a way that learning is like hunting: the prize isn’t always just staring at you in the face. Remember Prov 25:2.

**But Also Because My Flesh is Lazy** – You may be tempted to think about how easy it would be to just send them to that “free” government school. Your children are tempted to think about how easy it would be to attend it. Remember Prov 6:9-11.

**Keeps Me From “Real” Ministry** – We’ll address this later, but remember that the education of your children is the most fundamental kingdom-building work you can do. Educating your children is also one of the most religious things you do.

**We Are Mocked** – “*you homeschool?*” “*you go to that little Christian school?*” From well-meaning friends and family members as well as enemies of God. Remember Matt 5:10-11.

**Sidelong Glances** – We notice how much we have sacrificed and they haven’t. We notice how well it works for that family and not for ours. We notice who gets accolades for the littlest things while our work goes unappreciated. Remember James 3:14-16.

**Cultivating Gratitude in the Midst of the Hard Work of Education** (1 Thess 5:16-18) – “*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*” What is the good news that will cultivate this kind of gratitude?

**Childrearing: By Faith** (Rom 1:17) – The beginning of our duties in all aspects of our obedience as God’s covenant people is faith. Put another way, the heart of covenant-keeping is promise-believing. Our work must flow out of our joyful expectation of God’s favor upon us and upon our children, *from faith to faith*. Gratitude can only be cultivated by faith.

**Settled in the Promises of God** (Psalm 102:25-28, 103:17-18) – These promises are claimed by the mother of our Lord (Luke 1:48-50) and applied to the children of New Covenant parents (Eph 6:1-4). Gratitude does not come from looking first at your imperfect opportunities, imperfect attempts, and imperfect short term results. It comes by looking at the everlasting promises of God.

**Our Hope in Future Grace** (Is 65:22-23) – As the gospel goes out to all the world over generations, we are instructed to expect to see the curse on childrearing and on our work upon the ground reversed. Our hope in our childrearing is the hope of gospel maturity in the world and a progressive manifestation of Christ’s victory over all the created order.

**The Environment of Education** (Psalm 127) – In fact, our imperfect work and results only reminds us that if God isn’t in it, it isn’t going to succeed (vv1-2). But we are in fact in the midst of a war, and education is also one of the most martial things we are doing with our children, shaping them to take every thought captive against the enemies of unbelief (vv3-5). Gratitude comes from seeing that children are not an obstacle from doing “Christian ministry,” rather, children are the God-ordained weapons for kingdom building. Your work matters. Your studies matter. Your sacrifices matter. But they only matter because you are able to see, with eyes of faith, that God is doing the work.

**Stop and Give Thanks** – We talk about this but do not do it enough. Do you realize what God has given His church in the last couple decades here with regard to Christian education? Do you realize how many Christians still remain unconvinced and yet He has been so kind to open our eyes? Do you realize how many forget that “*the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge*” or ever see that with regard to the whole of education/discipleship of the next generation? How few actually believe that to “*take every thought captive*” has anything to do with algebra or history? And at the bottom of all of this, He has granted you faith to believe the promises for you and for your children – to a thousand generations. “*In everything, give thanks.*”