

The Holy Weapon of Thanksgiving – Eph 5:20

Introduction – “Gratitude is a rare thing...If you search the world around, among all choice spices you shall scarcely meet with the frankincense of gratitude. It ought to be as common as the dew-drops that hang upon the hedges in the morning; but, alas, the world is dry of thankfulness to God!” - Spurgeon. With Thanksgiving around the corner, let us consider the holy weapon that we have been given and spur one another on to use it in the fight for faithfulness.

The Command for Gratitude – 1 Thess 5:18 tells us to give thanks in everything for it is the will of God. Deut 28:47-48 warns the nation of Israel that they will fall under the curse of God for not serving the LORD with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything. Rom 1:18ff reveals that the heart of the unbeliever is hardened to God because he refuses to give thanks to Him. We are commanded to be a thankful people (Psalm 100:4-5). But Ephesians stands out showing us that the kind of gratitude that we are to have is evidence of the Spirit’s work (Eph 5:18-20). This is what the Spirit-filled man does. Instead of drinking himself away in his sorrows, he rejoices in God’s sovereign care and goodness in all things. Salvation not only grants us forgiveness of sins; we are made new, driven to see the grace of God in everything.

Giving Thanks in the Name of Jesus Christ – All of our praise, petitions, confessions, thanksgivings, and works of service must be offered up in Jesus’ name, because we always fall short. But our Great Mediator and High Priest lovingly receives them, blesses them, and having perfected them all, gives them to the Father on our behalf. In Christ, our heavenly Father is pleased to receive our worship and our thanksgiving.

Practicing Thanksgiving in Preparation for Eternity – Think about this the next time you are not thankful. What would it be like if you were constantly experiencing the intense feeling of gratitude, joy, and gladness. Don’t you realize that is where your life is headed? Thanksgiving is just one way of practicing for eternity (Rev 7:9-12). And so, you practice when you give thanks for your sandwich, when you give thanks for rest, for the Lord’s Day, for your paycheck, for your home, for your glass of wine, and for your knowledge of the love of God for you (Eph 3:14-21). Look for grace everywhere. John Piper writes, “Past grace is glorified by intense and joyful gratitude. Future grace is glorified by intense and joyful confidence.” You aren’t perfect at it yet? Fine, today is another pre-game warm-up.

Thankfulness in the Easy Providences – We will only be able to give thanks in the hard providences of God to the extent that we are giving thanks in the easy providences. Develop patterns of thanksgiving with remembrance before the Lord (this is what holidays and feast days are for). Set aside time to rejoice in the good things God has given you with friends and loved ones He has given you. This reminds us to not forget the mercies of God; forgetfulness begets thanklessness. Giving thanks humbles you; you never deserved any of these blessings – “Then King David went in and sat before the Lord; and he said: “Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?” (2 Sam 7:18).

Thankfulness in the Hard Providences – Giving thanks in the easy providences, whether you feel like it or not, preps you to give thanks in the hard providences whether you feel like it or not. Of course, Jesus is our great example who gave thanks over His own broken body in the establishment of the Lord’s Supper before He went and pleaded with God in Gethsemane. And so we take our petitions and supplications before God with thanksgiving (Phil 4:6-7). As the peace of God guards our hearts in Christ Jesus, we find that we count it all joy by faith, not feeling, when we go through trials (James 1:2-4). We repent of placing our faith and hope only in what we can see and make sense of (Heb 11:1).

Thankfulness as the Weapon of the Faithful – One of the hardest commands is to give thanks, not just *during* the trial but *for* the trial. We can become distracted by who or what brought the trial to us, forgetting the One who sent the trial to us. But God is really sovereign in every detail of life – or He is not God. Just as we teach our children to say thanks whether they feel like it or not, so too thanksgiving can be rendered by faith before the natural and emotional thanksgiving arrives for the celebration. Only faith sees that God is working in our trials something grander and more glorious than we could ever imagine (2 Cor 4:16-17). This faith disciplines thanksgiving in the hearts of believers like a spiritual shield forged in the fire of the heavenlies by the Holy Spirit.

That kind of thanksgiving will win battles, mortifying the flesh, and preparing us for glory. Fight pettiness with that thanksgiving. Fight bitterness with thanksgiving. Fight discontent with thanksgiving. Fight lust with thanksgiving. Fight covetousness with thanksgiving. Fight pessimism, agnosticism, and unbelief with thanksgiving. And then ask them to pass the potatoes, the stuffing, and the cranberries around again.

Dave Hatcher – November 18, 2018

Notes for Little Saints

What's your favorite dish in your family's Thanksgiving Feast?

As you eat that dish, think about tasting thankfulness. Think about how many good things God has given you.

In fact, get ready now – Write out 25 things God has given you that you can give Him thanks for.