

Focus on Being Thankful

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As James Smyda pointed out last Sabbath—a very good sermon by the way—we do live in an increasingly uncertain and obviously troubled times. We could go on and on about, that but despite that ominous fact, the reality is that most of us live in a very privileged society. I'm talking to God's people around the earth that are part of Pacific. We live in a very privileged society. In fact, if you are student of history, you will know that most of us live better than the kings in past centuries and past millennia ever lived.

An example of this is the Roman Empire in its hay-day and around the time of Christ when He walked this earth. Despite all the advances and culture and all of that, only 50% of the children who were born at that time, reached the age of ten—only 50%. Of those who survived—the 50% who survived—they only lived to be, on average, forty-five to fifty years old. There's a whole bunch of reasons for that and they are fairly obvious, sanitation being one of them. The fact is, the current life expectancy in the United States, even though it's dropped a couple of years because of Covid, is about seventy-nine years old, men and women combined. In Canada it's eighty-two and Australia it's eighty-three.

When you think about that and think about the fact that we have cooled homes with air conditioning in the summer and heated homes with central heating in the winter, something past generations would never have even dreamed of, much less had. When the sun goes down at night we can walk into a room and throw a switch and have light. That was hard to come by 100, 200 years and more ago. We don't have to go out and either gather or kill our food before every meal. We have food in this thing called a refrigerator in our home that's powered by electricity and we open the door and low and behold there's food for us. We have an oven in our homes to cook this food with. We don't have to go out and gather firewood to, either build a fire to cook our food or build a fire to try and get some heat in the middle of the winter. We don't have to do that. We have clean drinking water, which we take totally for granted. Not only do we have clean drinking water we have it from an indoor faucet. All we have to do is turn a knob and we have clean drinking water. We don't have to walk miles to get drinking water, as many, many millions of people have to do today in certain parts of the earth. Plus, we have hot water for bathing. We can take a shower or bath at our discretion. There are some days I've taken two or three showers a day. The fact is, in the past that just didn't occur.

King Louie the ninth bathed twice in his life. Queen Isabella of Spain was bathed on the day she was born and she bathed the day she got married and that was it. Back in those dark ages, as we call them, people just didn't bathe. In fact, in China and Japan that was different. Certainly, in Europe, bathing was viewed as a health risk, that's how ignorant we were back then.

We can travel half way around the world in the time it took a king to travel forty or fifty miles, 500 years ago. We have all of these blessings; we live in a free society today. We can come and go as we wish, despite the fact that those freedoms are being restricted more and more. But the fact is we don't have to show somebody some papers, we can go and come as we wish. The list of these blessings goes on and on when you think about it.

This is all despite the fact that our Father, as James pointed out, is allowing Satan to take our country down and to take the world down, at an increasingly faster pace. We have so much to be thankful for; we really have so much to be thankful for. And yet, in these latter days, when we have so much to be thankful for, we're told that mankind is going to be just the opposite—unthankful. Let's go to the very familiar scripture, 2 Timothy 3:1 where Paul is talking about the last days. For a time, Paul thought that he was in the last days, but he came to understand that that wasn't the case. Now, roughly 2000 years later, we are indeed right up into the last days.

2 Timothy 3:1 *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*
(KJV)

Indeed, they are. But notice in verse 2 the first thing that Paul says to describe this—*perilous times*.

2) For men shall be lovers of their own selves, [the very next word he uses is covetous—wanting more for the self] covetous, [then he goes on] boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, [then we come to this word] unthankful, unholy, (KJV)

Despite these incredible blessings, despite all of the things that we have, they are taken for granted and not appreciated. We see unthankfulness around us all the time. You can't turn on a news program without somebody showing some news item about somebody or some group protesting. Placards, marching up and down the street, yelling and screaming, their eyeballs popping out, their veins popping out, they are so upset about it. The fact is they are protesting because they are demanding something that they don't have and yet they want. I'm not saying all protests are not legitimate; I'm not saying that at all. The fact is, people are focusing on what they do not have rather than the blessings that we do have.

Mark Twain is one of my favorite writers. He was an American writer and obviously a humorist and he was a publisher and lecturer, born in 1835 and died in 1910 and he said this about the situation.

“If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you. This is the principal difference between a dog and a man.”

Think about that. Why would a man bite the hand that feeds him? Because man always wants more, man is never satisfied. In Ecclesiastes 5:10; Solomon is writing for our

benefit, giving us the lessons that he has learned, some of them very painful. I'm going to read this out of the NIV. I like the way the NIV translates this.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 *Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless. (NIV)*

We know that humans, like Satan, always want to get more, are never satisfied with what they have. Thankfulness to their Creator for His blessings does not even occur to most human beings today. Increasingly people do not even believe there is a Creator Who gives blessings. Our Father, as our Creator, wants to give His children blessings. He wants to give to His kids. Let's go to James 1:17 and see a truism, a principle about the character of God our Father and obviously His Son Jesus Christ who shares the same nature.

James 1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from [Who is the Originator of the blessings and every good and perfect gift?] the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (KJV)*

He does not change. Because of our Father's giving nature—He wants to give to us—He also wants us to be thankful for the gifts that we have and the gifts that He gives us. He wants us to be thankful for what we have been given and not focus on what we do not have. To focus on the gifts that He has already given us.

I ran across an interesting Hasidic parable and I think most of you are familiar with the sect of Judaism—the Hasidic sect where the men wear the hats and the long curls in their hair and dress in black and heavy coats and all of that. This is one of their parables, but it's interesting.

Once, times were tough, and two poor farmers were walking down a country lane and they met their Rabbi. "How is it for you?" the Rabbi asked the first man. The first man says, "lousy" he grumbled. He bemoaned his lot and his lack. "Terrible, hard, awful, not worth getting out of bed for, life is lousy". God was eavesdropping on this conversation. God thought to Himself, lousy? You think your life is lousy now? You ungrateful lout, I'll show you what lousy is. [This is a Hasidic parable; I'm not saying it's accurate but it makes a point.] Then the Rabbi turned to the second man, "And you, my friend?". He says, "Rabbi, life is good. God is so generous. Each morning I get up, when I'm awake I'm so grateful for the gift of another day of life, for I know rain or shine it will unfold in wonder and blessings too bountiful to count; life is so good" he said. God smiled as the second man's thanksgiving soared upward. "Good?" God said, "You think your life is good now? I'll show you what good is!"

We see here that this parable has a contrast of looking at life from two different perspectives. One is a thankful spirit and one focuses on everything that is going wrong or what one does not have. With that contrast in mind, let's go to Ephesians 5:1. Paul

addresses this, but keep this contrast in mind about how we can view the same thing and yet come away with two different viewpoints, two different opinions.

*Ephesians 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;
2) And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us [we don't deserve this] an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor.
3) But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;
4) Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. (KJV)*

Go to verse 17 now.

17) Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. (KJV)

What is His will?

*18) And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
19) Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; (KJV)*

Notice verse 20.

20) Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; (KJV)

Giving thanks always for all things, because even in a trial there can be a benefit; we can learn something. Giving thanks always for all things. That leads to our title today.

Focus on Being Thankful

In this very unthankful world, we need to focus on being thankful. We're going to look at this subject through five different points. The first is the foundation of it all.

1. True thanksgiving has to come from our heart; our innermost being.

It can't just be lip service. Notice Psalm 69:30; David is writing this Psalm. He makes a very important point about thanksgiving, whether it be from the heart or just out of routine. In his day, thanksgiving was in many ways, expressed by a sacrifice—by an offering.

Psalm 69:30 *I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.*

31) *This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs. (KJV)*

Why is that? Back then you could sacrifice an animal and your heart would not be thankful; you're just doing it out of duty or doing it because you don't want the wrath of God coming down on you. So, you sacrifice an animal as an insurance policy, but you're not thankful from the heart. There's no inner thankfulness. With that in mind let's go to 1 Chronicles 29:10. This is David's final recorded prayer that was written down for our benefit today. He's coming to the end of his life, Solomon his son is king and is going to build the temple. David had been assembling money and materials to build the temple which he was very thankful for.

1 Chronicles 29:10 *Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. (KJV)*

Notice his attitude.

11) *Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. (KJV)*

Notice where he's coming from. Everything belongs to God.

12) *Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.*

13) *Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. (KJV)*

His name is Yehovah. We praise Your name but we thank You.

14) *But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. (KJV)*

We're just giving back to you what you've already given us. Verse 17.

17) *I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart [You test us], and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee.*

18) *O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, [that is God Almighty, the Most High God] keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee: (KJV)*

He's asking God to keep this thankfulness, this joy of giving for the temple in the imagination of their heart going forward. Israel needed that help and while David was indeed thankful from the heart, Israel was not. David had the Holy Spirit in him, we know that. We also know that Israel did not have a heart that resembled the nature and character of God Almighty. We won't turn there but you remember in Deuteronomy 5, Yehovah lamented that, "*Oh I wish there was a heart in them (referring to Israel) that they would fear Me and keep My commandments always*". Israel didn't have that heart and David was asking that they could keep this joyous "heart of giving" that they had at that moment in time. Israel didn't have a Godly heart and they did not keep that spirit and attitude for very long. Let's go to Romans 1:18 and see what Paul has to say about having a thankful heart. Paul is giving us some very important eternal truths here in this section of scripture. I'll read this out of the NLT.

Romans 1:18 *But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. (NLT)*

We have seen people suppress the truth. We've seen it in the church, we see it out of the church. They did it in Christ's day by opposing Him.

19) They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. (NLT)

Verse 21.

21) Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God [notice this] or even give him thanks. (NLT)

If you acknowledge God as our Creator, our Father is our Creator, then we're in a position of giving Him thanks for what He has created. But if you don't acknowledge God as Creator, you don't have to give anybody thanks and that's our world today.

21 continues) ... And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. (NLT)

Today, Satan is turning our world into a secular world; a Godless world, a Godless society and the belief in a Supreme Being is at an all-time low these days. What Paul is telling us is a fundamental fact that we need to always keep in mind. When humans fail to acknowledge their Creator—when they fail to acknowledge God Almighty as their Creator—they fail to acknowledge even their Creator's existence, their heart becomes darkened and confused, as Paul just wrote. So true thankfulness has to come from the heart, from our inner most being. Not a show, not a demonstration, but coming from the heart.

That leads us to a second point in focusing on thankfulness.

2. Christ set the example of thanking His Father.

Let's go to Luke 10:21. We're breaking into the account where Christ sent out the seventy and they went out and performed miracles and healed the sick. They came back and reported with great joy about what the Father had done through the Holy Spirit, when they went out. Christ is rejoicing.

Luke 10:21 *In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes [these seventy that He sent out as an example]: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

22) All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. (KJV)

The point here is in verse 21, Christ openly said,

"Father, I thank you for what you're doing; I thank You for the work that You are doing."

He was grateful for that. Let's go to a second example in John 11:39. We're breaking into the account of the death of Lazarus. He has just died—in fact he's been dead four days—and Christ is on the scene now and everyone is upset. Martha particularly is upset about the death of Lazarus.

John 11:39 *Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.*

40) Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

41) Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, [now He's addressing His Father] I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

42) And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

43) And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44) And he that was dead came forth ... (KJV)

So here are two examples of Christ thanking His Father. Of course, there are many other examples of Christ expressing thankfulness towards His Father and He is, in that way, setting an example for us.

That comes to the third point and we will spend more time on this point than any other. The third point is about us today.

3. Giving of thanks should be a daily occurrence.

We should not let a day go by without being thankful to our Father; we just shouldn't.

If you like to outline, point A.

3A. We need to be thankful in our daily prayers.

With that in mind let's go to Daniel 6:9. We're breaking into the account where King Darius signed a decree that no one could ask anything from any God, except they ask King Darius, who was presenting himself as their god. They couldn't do it for a period of thirty days and that was signed into law as an attempt to trip up Daniel.

Daniel 6:9 *Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.*

10) Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day [for decades the church has taught that if you can, to pray three times a day], and prayed, [notice what his prayer was about] and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. (KJV)

So, the character of his prayer, the only mention of what the content of his prayer was, was *"thankfulness"*, three times a day to be thankful. He gave thanks while his life was in danger for doing that very thing—praying to God Almighty. Of course, he paid a price for that, but our Father rescued him. Paul continues that same theme in Colossians 4:2. No need to turn there, it's such a short verse. Paul says:

"Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving".

Daniel set the example; Paul mentions it again. So, point A is we need to be thankful in our daily prayers.

3B. We need to be thankful for our everyday blessings because every day we have blessings.

Every time we throw the light switch, it's a blessing. Every time we turn the air conditioning on and it works, it's a blessing. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Paul is instructing the church in Thessalonica about being thankful.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 *In everything give thanks [that means large things and small things]: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (KJV)*

It is God's will that we give Him thanks for what He has given to each one of us. Paul even demonstrates that in his personal conduct. Acts 28:15 is just a small example of the fact that Paul followed his own advice. Luke records Paul setting this example. He is arriving in the area of Rome but notice what he did.

Acts 28:15 *And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage. (KJV)*

Paul was thankful for the simple fact that the brethren would come out to meet him. He was thankful for that and he thanked God for that. Of course, we need to be thankful for our daily meals, our daily food; Christ set the example of that. Remember the 4000 men plus women and children in Matthew 15? He asked a blessing on the food. The 5000 in John 6, He did exactly the same thing. Of course, He thanked God for the bread and wine that we take on Passover evening. We have it recorded that Paul was on a voyage by ship from Jerusalem to Italy and there were 276 people on board—they were going to shipwreck later—but they had a fast and they broke the fast and before they ate, Paul asked a blessing on the food for those 276 people. There are examples of asking blessings throughout the Bible for our daily food.

We need to be thankful for the everyday things. I can remember once when we owned our own business, I traveled a lot and I can remember coming back from Vancouver, Canada and it was probably one in the morning and I was going through Ellensburg. For those who don't understand Ellensburg, there is a long hill that you pull up going south toward our home in Yakima. In the East coast you would call it a mountain but here in the Northwest it's a hill. It's about 1000 feet above the valley floor. I was the only person on the road, there were no lights in sight. I looked off to the north and I saw the Aurora Borealis. We get to see it occasionally but not that often. So here it is, 1:30-2:00 in the morning. I just pulled off to the side of the freeway, shut the car down, shut the lights off and leaned up against the fender and just looked for about ten or fifteen minutes. I was tired but how often do you get a chance to see this. These shimmering curtains of turquoise, blue and green and you just sit there and marvel and say, "God, how marvelous are You? Thank you for allowing me to even see some of your creation like this". It makes an impression and we need to be thankful for these every day blessings that we have.

The third, point C—now we're getting into more serious things to be thankful for.

3C. We need to be thankful for our calling.

Thankful that God reached down and called us. When we think about the billions of people who have ever lived and how many He has actually called and we are here today to worship Him on the Sabbath because of that calling. How thankful should we be? Look at Colossians 1:12, Paul is encouraging the people in the church at Colossi and of course us today, to be thankful for that calling and where those callings lead.

Colossians 1:12 *... always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. (NLT)*

Thankful to God Almighty, to share this inheritance.

13) For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son. (NLT)

How thankful on a daily basis should we be for that? Look at Colossians 2:6 now. I'll read this out of the New Living Translation.

Colossians 2:6 *And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. (NLT)*

Verse 7 out of the King James.

7) Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving [for this calling that we have]. (KJV)

We have been called to this faith; we have been called to this belief. Where would we be without our calling? We would be lost; we would have no hope without our calling. That is something we should be thankful for every day.

3D. We should be thankful for the church.

That our Father even created the church, bearing His name, placed His Son as its Head, how thankful should we be that we have a church to go to? To fellowship in. Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:1. Paul is introducing this Epistle so he's speaking on behalf of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy.

1 Thessalonians 1:1 *Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

2) We give thanks to God always for you all [thanks for the church, thanks for the brethren in the church], making mention of you in our prayers; (KJV)

Then notice 1 Thessalonians 2:13, he continues this same thought process, this same example. I'll read this out of the NLT.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 *Therefore, we never stop thanking God that when you received his message from us, you didn't think of our words as mere human ideas. You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you who believe. (NLT)*

We know that we're called into one body and we're told to be thankful—that's Colossians 3:14, we don't need to turn there. We are called into one body and we need to be thankful for that body and for that calling. We're so blessed to have a local church because so many brethren don't. All of you out there who are listening or watching or will do so, the vast majority of you are by yourselves or with one or two or three people and here we have a whole room full of people to fellowship with. How thankful should

we be for that? How thankful all of us here should be that we can have a Sabbath service and stream it for the benefit of God's people.

3E. We need to be thankful on the Sabbath especially.

Here we are, worshiping God Almighty on the Sabbath. Let's go to one verse, Psalm 92:1, the very beginning of Psalm 92. David tells us, it's a good thing to give thanks on the Sabbath day. In fact, Psalm 92:1, if you have a heading before that Psalm starts, in most translations it says "A Psalm for the Sabbath Day".

Psalm 92:1 *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: (KJV)*

He is the Most High, He is the Almighty, His name is Yehovah and the Sabbath is a special day to give our thanks to Him for His many, many blessings.

The last sub point under **3**—of needing to be thankful for everyday things.

This one is the most important.

3F. Thankfulness for Who our Father is and Who His Son is.

Thankfulness for Who they are. We need to thank God every day for Who He is and Who His Son is. Notice Psalm 30:4—we were in Psalm 92 so just back to Psalm 30:4. This was a Psalm that was sung at the dedication of the completion of David's house. But notice the tenor of this song.

Psalm 30:4 *Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his [that's who we are], and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. (KJV)*

Give thanks because He is holy—that is Who He is. How thankful we should be for that. We should be thankful that the Father and His Son don't change. We've already read that earlier, we won't turn there but in Malachi 3:6, Yehovah says, "*I am Yehovah, I change not*". Then in Hebrews 13:8, we won't turn there either, but you can use it as a reference, we are told that *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, is the same today and will be the same forever*. So how thankful should we be that the Father and His Son don't change? And their plan of salvation doesn't change. How would it be to worship a God Who wakes up one morning and says, "*The Ten Commandments are all done away with, I've got a new plan*" or "I want you to do this, that or something else". The Father and His Son reassure us that what they said in the beginning, what they said when these words were written and what they say to us through the Holy Spirit, *does not change*. 1 John 4:18 is talking about Who God is and Who His Son is. This defines our Father in many ways.

1 John 4:8 *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. (KJV)*

Now to verse 16.

16) And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. [He repeats it again] God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. (KJV)

I took the time to look up the word “is” here where it says *God is love* and that’s [Strong’s #1510](#) and it’s the Greek word *eimi* (eye-me) and it means “I exist, I am”. That’s really interesting. If you look at [Help’s Word Studies](#) and what they have to say about it, they say this about *eimi*:

The basic Greek verb which expresses being; that is to be.

In other words, Who He is. Going on in Help’s:

The “I am”, the Greek is ego eimi, the “I am” harks back to God’s only name, Yehovah. Meaning He who always was, is and will be.

It’s amazing that the researchers who did [Help’s Word Study](#) understood even from a New Testament perspective, the name of God Almighty and how it ties in when we say, God is love. We should be forever thankful that “love” is our Father’s defining characteristic. It’s not harshness, it’s not retribution, it’s not vengeance; “love” is His defining characteristic and His Son has the same nature. They are together in their nature; therefore, this is their defining characteristic. He and His Son never change. How thankful should we be for that?

Now we go to the fourth point.

4. Thankfulness for man has scientifically proven benefits.

CNN reported recently about the subject of thankfulness and in a part of their report they interviewed a teacher and a doctrinal student at the University of Michigan in neuroscience and psychology. Her name was Christina Costa and she does research on of all things, “thankfulness”. This pricked my interest. She said you can see thankfulness on a brain scan. Can you imagine? She said feelings of thankfulness light up the feel-good part of our brain. In other words, it increases the neurotransmitters of dopamine and serotonin and decrease the stress hormones of cortisol. So when you are being thankful, you’re revving up your feel-good hormones and you’re diminishing the stress hormones. She says:

The neurotransmitter reactions are pretty immediate. It’s hard to feel bad when you’re focusing on someone who you are so grateful for or something that changed your life or something that is going really, really well today.

Doesn’t our Father and His Son fit all three categories of that? Someone you’re grateful for, someone Who has changed your life and someone Who is making your life go well

today and it lights up that part of the brain and they can actually see it in a scan. What thankfulness does, they have found—this same research group found—is that it increases your immune system’s strength and health, if you’re thankful. This researcher, Costa said:

Studies have shown that thankfulness can indirectly influence physical health as well. Thankfulness strengthens your immune system and helps you experience less pain, by being thankful.

In another study they found that thankful teens were less likely to use drugs or alcohol. This is a study of New York teenagers and they got the group together and rated them on a scale of being thankful—who were the most thankful and who were the least thankful. Then they examined their lives and their conduct and found that the ones who were most thankful were less likely to abuse drugs and less likely to abuse alcohol, because of their thankfulness.

Thankfulness also allows us to sleep better. There was another study done involving college students and they were told to try and be thankful and try to find ways to enhance their thankfulness. They suggested using a gratitude journal, that at the end of each day you would write down what good happened that day and what you should be thankful for. They found out that those who participated in writing it down or thinking about it before bedtime, they were less worried at bedtime (these are college students) and those who were thankful slept longer and more deeply and slept better by being thankful.

In another study of adults in the United Kingdom, they studied a group of adults, 40% of whom has sleep disorders. Sleeping was problematic for them. Before bed they were trained by these researchers to think about what they should be thankful for and what they were thankful for. After a period of instruction they measured their sleep (before and after the instruction) and those who were thankful fell asleep sooner and stayed asleep longer, by thinking about what they should be thankful for before they went to sleep.

Also, studies have shown that thankfulness increases our resilience. Including our ability to cope with stress, our ability to cope with trauma, or some disaster in our life. Studies have shown that counting our blessings, and I know that’s kind of cliché, but studies show that people who do count their blessings—acknowledge their blessings—fare better. They have used that technique to help Vietnam war veterans manage their PTSD by getting them to focus on the blessings they have rather than the trauma they endured in the past. They also use that technique for 9/11 survivors. It’s a coping strategy for the trauma they endured by focusing on being thankful and for what they should be thankful for.

Also, studies have shown that thankfulness helps in a marriage. In a study published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, five researchers wrote a paper. They concluded that couples good at exhibiting thankfulness to each other—thanking each

other for what they did and what they do for one another—tend to be more committed in their marriage. They are more likely to remain married for a longer period of time if they establish the habit of expressing thanks one to another on a daily basis.

Ending this fourth point about how thankfulness has health benefits, our Father designed our bodies in such a way—I think it's very clear that he designed our bodies in such a way—that when we have a thankful spirit or we have a thankful attitude, our health benefits as a result. Why would God do otherwise? If He wants us to be thankful, why would He curse us for being thankful? But He encourages us to be thankful and says by the way, if you'll do that, your health will benefit. You'll sleep better, you'll have less stress, you can cope with life's trauma's better if you will just be thankful.

Now we come to the fifth and final point.

5. Thankfulness leads to contentment and peace.

When we're thankful, we are more content and we are more peaceful. I can tell you from personal experience, that is absolutely true. If we focus on what we have been given and how blessed we are, we have a sense of peace and a sense of contentment that we otherwise would not have. In Hebrews 13:5 the author of Hebrews states a very fundamental fact. I'll read this out of the New King James.

Hebrews 13:5 *Let your conduct be without covetousness;* (NKJV)

We talked about that in the introduction; how in the last days people will be covetous.

5 continued) ... be content with such things as you have. (NKJV)

We're such a blessed society, we could spend hours talking about the things we have. From hot and cold running water, to heat and air conditioning, to transportation, to a soft bed at night, to not being driven out of our homes and put in jail and all of those things. Be content with the things you have.

5 continued) ... For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (NKJV)

Yehovah has said, I'll never leave you nor forsake you. He said it in Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Isaiah. Be content with what we have. In 1 Timothy 6:8. Paul says the same thing, a bit more specifically. Paul gives us some good advice. He is advising young Timothy, a newly minted Elder and less experienced than Paul.

1 Timothy 6:8 *And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.* (KJV)

The fact is, if we examine our lives, we have basically everything we really need. We have food, we have clothing, we have shelter, we have warmth, we have cooling, we're not worried about where the next meal is coming from. We have peace, we have safety,

we have so many blessings. We have everything we really need and yet man wants to focus on—I want a better house or a better car or I want to wear these clothes or that handbag or those pair of shoes; I just can't exist without the next whatever it is that people lust for. If we are truly thankful for what we have, we will be content. It will be just fine. Notice Philippians 4:6, I'm going to read this out of the NLT; this is a great translation. In preparing a sermon I try to look at other translations but every once in a while, one just hits home.

Philippians 4:6 *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. (NLT)*

Tell Him what you need but thank Him for what He's already done. This is from a man who was beaten with rods three times, three times shipwrecked, once stoned and left for dead and he's saying,

"Don't worry about anything, be thankful for what you have, be thankful for what God has done."

If Paul can do that, so can we and so should we.

Let's summarize and conclude here. We've heard the analogy about the glass being half full or half empty and it depends on how you view that half full glass or half empty glass. If our glass is half empty, what we're doing is focusing on the part of the water that is missing. In other words, we are focusing on what we don't have. But if our glass is half full, we're focusing on the fact that we have a half full glass of water and that's a good thing. We aren't focusing on the part that's not full. So, we have to ask ourselves, in the grand scheme of things, as we live our daily lives, what do we have going for us right now that's really good? We have family, we have friends, we have love in our lives, we have health, we have freedom from war and freedom from natural disaster. We have a church. We know Who God is and Who His Son is. We have a roof over our heads. We have hope. We have opportunities. We also have memories that we cherish. We have relative financial stability. Nobody is a billionaire around here, but we have enough for our needs. We have our favorite places that we like to go to or to remember. We have good weather. We have books. We have music. We have ice cream. We have something good that happened today. We have something bad that didn't happen today. We have a good cup of coffee in the morning. So, life is good. I think you've heard of Tecumseh. He was a Shawnee warrior and chief, born in 1768 and died in 1813 and this chief said this:

"When you arise in the morning, give thanks for the food and the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies only in yourself."

Think about that; because we have so much to be thankful for. I asked if your glass is half full or half empty? For us, being called and having the Father and the Son make their abode in us through the Holy Spirit, we have God's Word, we have the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us to salvation and to resist Satan and the world. When we look

at our glass, it should be overflowing; it shouldn't be half full or half empty. It should be overflowing. If we think about our calling, if we think about our future, our glass is indeed overflowing. Let's go to Psalm 118:29 and see this one verse. We have to ask ourselves, how thankful should I be for what this says.

Psalm 118:29 *O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endures forever. (KJV)*

Because He is a good God, a merciful God to us, His children.

Let's go to one final scripture in the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 15:57. In Psalms we are told to give thanks to Yehovah and Paul tells us to do the same thing. Paul is making this declaration. This is the joy, the overflowing part.

1 Corinthians 15:57 *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)*

How thankful should we be for our glorious future, for our calling, for His Holy Spirit in us. There's an American author named Adam Clark, born in 1943 and died not too long ago in 2018 and said something profound about being grateful and thankful.

"In our daily lives we must see that it is not happiness that makes us grateful. But the gratefulness that makes us happy."

Being grateful makes us happy. Being thankful for our Father's blessings is a blessing in and of itself. Being thankful brings physical blessings, spiritual blessings and benefits such as peace, contentment and health. So being thankful is a blessing in and of itself. It is increasingly important in these very *perilous times* that we face. So going forward let's focus on being thankful.