

BE: Be Thankful
Philippians 4:4

August 24, 2014

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Text Introduction: In our ONE Day service (on August 31) and beyond, I will issue the challenge to “Do Something” for God that you have never done. At the same time that we ask this question, we will ask God as a church collectively to unify us around one thing that we can do together that we have never done before in the history of our church.

I sense that this could be a very exciting time for us as a church. I believe that this is the kind of challenge that will help us to grow as Jesus’ disciples and help us to grow in our relationships with one another. However, I want to make something clear. We cannot do something just to do something. We could be so busy doing things that we forget that Jesus calls us to a relationship of being. So, I have used these Sundays leading up to our ONE Day celebration thinking about who we are to be. As we have said, “Being Precedes Doing!” We have talked about “Being Holy” and “Being Jesus’ disciple.” Last week, we talked about “Being Content.” Today, I want to talk about an attitude that accompanies contentment—thanksgiving. We turn again to the book of Philippians.

Text: Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Introduction: The spirit of thanksgiving is one of the basic qualities God longs for in His children. Perhaps we lack thanksgiving, because we lack contentment. Would you allow God today to walk you through some parts of your life to show you the many blessings? The hymn writer urges us to *Count {Our} Blessings*. In this book of rejoicing, that is precisely what the Apostle Paul does for us.

Reasons to Rejoice . . .

1. People God has allowed me to know (1:3-8)

Paul is content first of all because of the people God has placed in his life. We read about that in the beginning of this letter.

I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, ⁴always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer, ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, and you are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and establishment of the gospel. ⁸For God is my witness, how deeply I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

In chapter 4, he is again thanking them for what they are willing to do for him.

When I think of people, I can be thankful for . . .

- What they have done for me.

My list is long of the people that have been a blessing to me. I think of teachers and coaches as I was going through school. In our first church, I think about the blessing of friendship of a man by the name of James Stewart who lived across the street. The story is too long and personal, but I don't know if I would still be in the ministry if he would not have been so faithful to the LORD and to us in my first crisis as a pastor.

I am thankful for people like Tom and Nan Hudson (They are both in Heaven now) No finer two people have ever walked the face of the earth, and I had the privilege of being their pastor. I think about a lady named Rosalie Lang who kept Josh for us in the first two years of his life. Never has God been so gracious to us than to bring this dear lady into our family's life.

I think about Dr. Perry Sanders, the pastor of this wonderful church for 47 years.

I think about a couple of men in my life right now who are consistent encouragers to me.

- What God has done and is doing in them.

I am also grateful for the way that God is working in people's lives. No greater thrill is mine than to see people walk in obedience to the LORD.

2. Problems God has allowed me to face (1:12-14)

Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has actually resulted in the advance of the gospel, ¹³so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is in the cause of Christ. ¹⁴Most of the brothers in the Lord have gained confidence from my imprisonment and dare even more to speak the message fearlessly.

I am also thankful for the problems that God has allowed me to face. Understand that I sometimes struggle with being thankful for these problems. But, when we are able to sit back, many times years later, and see what God was doing in the problems, we can be thankful.

Notice the benefits of the problems.

- Strategic Contacts—Though in prison, Paul was thankful for the contacts that prison brought to him to share the Gospel.
- Strengthened the Courage of others
- My Savior will be Celebrated.

Yet, I recognize that during the problem it is not easy to give thanks. A story from the life of Matthew Henry reveals how a Christian should think when circumstances don't go the way we would necessarily like. The well-known Bible commentator, was once robbed by thieves who took all of his money. Opening his diary later that evening, Henry wrote, 'Let me be thankful, first because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse, they didn't take my life; third, although they took my all, it wasn't much. And fourth because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.'

3. Past from which God has delivered me (3:4-10)

although I once also had confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day; of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; regarding the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ regarding zeal, persecuting the church; regarding the righteousness that is in the law, blameless. ⁷ But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰ My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

Paul was thankful for the deliverance he had from his past. If we are Christians, we can always be thankful for the grace of Jesus Christ. We can always be thankful for a relationship with Jesus Christ.

4. Place God has assured me will be my home (3:20)

but our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was confident that he had a place in Heaven. That's reason for real thanksgiving.

5. Personal relationship I have with Christ (4:13)

I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Rick Warren has written, "The grass isn't greener on the other side; it's greener where it is watered." You water by giving thanks. Thanksgiving and contentment go together hand in hand.