

Overflowing Thankfulness 11-28-99

Col 2:7 1Thes 5:18

IN everything – We just celebrated a National Day of thanks to God. My how far our Nation has fallen from the day that holiday was established. I don't think it would make it through the Congress today. But THANK GOD such a day is still celebrated – THANK GOD that where iniquity abounds grace much more abounds --THANK GOD that little lights are easier to see when it is darkest.

In everything – We know the HS was inspiring the Apostle and as we learned last week, when God commands He also enables. Just like when He said to the man "Stretch out your hand" He says to us "In everything give thanks" or as NIV translates it, "give thanks in all circumstances". How do we do that?

How do we obey such an impossible command? We just do it! We determine we will do it, believing that God has enabled us to do it. We know Ro 8:28 is true – that God can take every circumstance and work for good and so by faith we obey and thank Him. It is easy to thank God for blessings, we have so many we take them for granted. Perhaps the challenge for us in being thankful is not to grow dull because of the abundance of blessing.

Can you see how day after day we have water to drink and air to breathe, food and clothes and shelter and we just get used to it and forget Ja 1:17. I lived several years out of a sleeping bag and do you know what I found I was very thankful for? Clean sheets, warm showers, oh now I thank God for them. Funny how He has to take away the things we take for granted before we realize what a good gift they are. Ought oh!

2Cor 9:14,15 Do we take grace for granted. God forbid He should remove that for an instant. Indescribable gift that it is! Thank HIM! We could tie this right in with the message about God is good. The HS already did. Ps 136:1-3 Why do we thank Him? He's so good to us! His love endures forever – now connect that with Ja 1:17 and you have a reason for endless thanks to God! He's not going to change. He'll always be good to all those who call on Him in truth. Oh He's good and everything He does is good and that will never change.

Yes there is evil and pain and consequences of sin but even in the devastating experiences of life we can be thankful. You know why in those circumstances you can be thankful? You got the Comforter walking with You through it, in it, feeling with you, loving you through it. And you can take that comfort and bless others with it. I can be thankful that 1Peter 1:6,7 is true. Greatly rejoice in trials? YES! YOU CAN. Rejoice that your faith is being refined, that it will result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus comes. Go ahead and read verse 8. Do you think that inexpressible joy results in thanks, overflowing thanks.

I can be thankful He provides a way to escape so I can bear it! 1Co 10:13.

Joseph told his brothers that what they meant for evil God meant for good. Do you think Joseph could see good with his carnal mind when he was sold into slavery? When Potaphar threw him unjustly into jail? When he interpreted the dream but was forgotten? Well maybe if he looked back at his God given dreams he might have had a clue but I doubt he saw any connection. If he is at all like you and me he wondered if the dreams were from God at all. I can't see it with my carnal mind but by faith in who God is, faith in his omnipotence and unfailing love, I can thank Him for it all.

The abiding fruit of the Spirit JOY causes me to thank God continually. It shapes my attitude about what is going on in my life. Have you observed yet that when you are really joyful in the Lord everything seems to be a blessing, even difficulties? We are seeing reality. The world says we are deluding ourselves but it's because they are jealous of our joy. Reality is God is sovereign and his glory fills the earth. But, when the carnal nature gets a foot in the door one event that appears bad leads to another and another until we are very discouraged. I don't think the events are so different, it is whether we see the reality behind the events or perceive them to be against us – Satan's lie.

Ok for a second imagine you are in the Children of Israel's shoes. You've witnessed the plagues on Egypt, you walked through the Red Sea on dry ground and saw the enemy swallowed up, but it has been three days in the desert and your water reserves are gone and your baby is crying with thirst. 2 possible reactions. Look at what God has done. He delivered you. He protected you. Of course He will provide for you if you will just ask and trust in His time and way He will provide. OR, you can say, "What is wrong with God? He led us out here because there wasn't enough room in Egypt to bury us all. We're gonna die!

Did God deliver you from the world? Did He save you from the enemy of besetting sin? Do you face a difficulty before you? Which way will you react?

A positive thankful attitude is a Spirit filled attitude. I pray the church of Jesus will catch the vision of being joyful like her groom. He has the anointing of joy above that of his brothers. Is 61:3 Even when in tears in John 11 he begins his prayer, "I thank you Father that You have heard my prayer." The joyful person has more opportunities to witness, more receptive ears to speak to because people want to find out why he's smiling. He changes the atmosphere when he walks in the room. He is uplifting to all who talk with him. People leave his presence with hope and encouragement. You know he looks like someone you know, – Jesus! You say, "could never be me" Is 51:10-16 Are you ransomed? Come on then this is how we're suppose to live. Everlasting joy on our heads, no fear of man, this is our call for we His people!

Three weeks ago we looked at painful things in our past present and future and declared God is Good! Let's go one more step and seeing ourselves in those difficulties say, Thank you Lord, for You are with me, You are my comfort. In these trying situations I give you thanks. In them I am more than a conqueror! In them I still am surrounded with blessing.

If you haven't borrowed Barb's tape from Focus on the Family you need to. The man with Muscular Dystrophy shares about how he came to Christ. He praises God for his condition because his condition helped him find Jesus and be a witness. Someone asks him, "Don't you want God to heal you brother Ring?" And he boldly joyfully says, "I am healed, I am healed on the inside where it counts. Don't you want to be healed?" Oh how we look at the temporal. See how his thankful heart put him in touch with REALITY? Stop walking by sight and open the eyes of your spirit. You are enveloped in blessings. You are so blessed !

Read Eph 1:3-14 in the Message. Open your eyes to reality and start being a person known for the fruit of JOY that overflows into thanksgiving!