

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

## Introduction: The Need for Gratitude

Gratitude is a state of being grateful. It simply means, “Thankfulness.” The Greek word that expresses this idea in the New Testament means, “To feel thankful” or “To express gratefulness.” We understand what gratitude is. We know ingratitude when we see it. But why should we be people of gratitude.

Jesus was a man of gratitude. Some 10 times the Gospel accounts record that He “gave thanks.” Jesus commended the thanksgiving of the Samaritan leper who was healed. He also condemned the nine who were ungrateful (Luke 17:12-19). If we desire to follow Jesus and to please Him, we must be men and women of gratitude.

Paul was also a man of gratitude. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he taught Christians to be grateful and to express their gratitude. “*Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you*” (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). It is God’s will for Christians to give thanks. The Christian is in Christ and must be thankful for the salvation, fellowship, and all spiritual blessings that are found in Him. Gratitude is God’s will “concerning you!” God wants us to be grateful.

Gratitude cultivates and demonstrates humility. In order to be thankful, one must admit that he is dependent upon another. He must recognize that there are things out of his control. He must acknowledge the power, help, concern, and love of one greater than himself. Gratitude keeps one humble – and protects from soul-endangering pride (Rom. 1:21). Those who are unthankful do not think correctly. They become “vain in their imaginations” (KJV) or “futile in their thinking” (ESV). Their heart is foolish and begins to darken – to be obscured from light. This leads men down a path of sin that grows more depraved and more distant from God.

Gratitude is necessary because God deserves it. Gratitude is needed because God commands it. Gratitude is desirable because man is benefited from it. We must be people of gratitude!

## Growing Gratitude

Today grow in gratitude by reflecting on the things that you could not be, do, or accomplish without someone else – especially God. Embrace your dependence upon others. Allow it to make you humble. Where does the air you breathe come from? Who grew the food you ate for lunch? Who built the business that employs you? What family member or friend helped you today? Who is praying for you? What specific things has God done for you today?

As you go through your day, focus on being thankful. When difficulties arise, remember how much you have to be thankful for. Be mindful of your many blessings.

*“PRAY WITHOUT CEASING. IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS: FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS CONCERNING YOU” (1 THESSALONIANS 5:17-18).*

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

## Day 01

### Gratitude: Motivated by Salvation

As we begin our journey into deeper gratitude, we must start with motivation. What inspires gratitude? What prompted gratitude in the life of Paul? His answer was clear: salvation.

Paul's conversion to Christ is well known to the student of Scripture. He was an enemy of Jesus and a persecutor of the church. Yet, the Lord showed love, grace, and mercy toward the sincere yet sinful Saul of Tarsus. After obeying the Gospel, Paul immediately began a life of devoted service to the Christ and His church. He was grateful for the forgiveness of his sins. Yet, he was also thankful for the opportunity the Lord granted, allowing him to be of service in spite of his past.

Paul declared, *"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. ... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief"* (1 Timothy 1:12-13, 15). Because the Lord had done this for him, Paul was moved by gratitude to give his life in service to Jesus. *"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me"* (1 Corinthians 15:9-10). God's grace and Paul's salvation were the motivating factors of gratitude in the life of Paul.

Like Paul, we all were enemies of God due to our sins. Yet, even when we were sinners, He still loved us and offered us forgiveness and salvation (Rom. 5:8-10). Are you grateful for your salvation? How do you demonstrate your gratitude to God for His unspeakable gift of Jesus?

## Growing Gratitude

Today, our exercise in gratitude is one of memorization. Commit the words of 2 Corinthians 9:15 to your memory. Throughout the day, repeat these words and reflect upon the gift that God gave to purchase your salvation. Each time you pray, give thanks to God for the gift of His only-begotten Son. Pause to consider all of the blessings that come with your salvation – fellowship, family, prayer, comfort, freedom, security, peace, hope, and eternal life in Heaven. Consider why God's gift is called "unspeakable" – why words truly fail to express or describe the gift God has given to us. Determine to give your life as a gift to Him. Rededicate yourself to faithful, devoted service to the Lord and His church.

*"THANKS BE UNTO GOD FOR HIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT" (2 CORINTHIANS 9:15).*

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

## Day 02

### Gratitude: Demonstrated by Action

Paul's life is a demonstration of gratitude in action! He was grateful to God for his salvation and his second chance at service. But that gratitude was not something that he kept hidden inside. Instead, he expressed it in word and deed throughout the rest of his life.

After hearing what he needed to do, and what the Lord wanted him to do, Paul immediately obeyed (Acts 9:18; 22:16; 26:19; Gal. 1:15-16). At once he began to engage in the work the Lord called him to do – preaching the Gospel (Acts 9:20). He continued to grow and to mature in his faith and service (Acts 9:22). He traveled far and wide, enduring tremendous hardship and persecution, to obey the Lord (Acts 26:20-23). Why did Paul do these things? He was expressing his gratitude to the Lord (1 Timothy 1:12-17)!

Paul also declared his gratitude to God in words. He thanked God in prayer (Eph. 1:16), in song (Acts 16:25), in praise (Romans 11:33-36), and in writing (2 Corinthians 9:15). He made sure to tell God how thankful he was for grace and salvation.

Paul even expressed gratitude to his brothers and sisters in Christ. He wrote: “*We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers. ... For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face...*” (1 Thessalonians 1:2; 3:9-10). He did not assume that they knew how he felt, but told them in simple, heartfelt words. Remember that these words were written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God wanted Paul to say, “Thank you!”

## Growing Gratitude

Today, consider the ways that you can express your gratitude to God. We all can pray, sing, and assemble to worship the Almighty. What more can you do? What talent do you have that can be used to thank Him? What opportunities are present in your life that can be used to demonstrate gratefulness? Now, make a list. Write down the things you can do to show gratitude to God.

- |          |           |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____  | 11. _____ | 16. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____  | 12. _____ | 17. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____  | 13. _____ | 18. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____  | 14. _____ | 19. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ | 15. _____ | 20. _____ |

“*GIVING THANKS ALWAYS FOR ALL THINGS UNTO GOD AND THE FATHER IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST*” (EPHESIANS 5:20).

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

## Day 03

### Gratitude: For God's Blessings upon Others

Paul was thankful for the blessings that God had bestowed upon his own life. That gratitude motivated his faithful obedience and service to the Lord. However, Paul was not selfish, stingy, or jealous when it came to the blessings of God. He wanted others to be blessed. In fact, he was thankful to God for His blessings upon others!

*“I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ?” (1 Corinthians 1:4-8).*

There are times when we look upon the blessings of others and feel jealous, as though we have been slighted by God. We see the talents of another and wonder why we cannot do what they seem to do so easily. If we are not careful, we may begin to envy, to hate, or to wish ill upon another – simply because they have been blessed by God!

An attitude of gratitude can help to protect us from these evil thoughts and feelings. We should be thankful when God demonstrates His grace and mercy in the life of another. We should be grateful when God proves His compassion by granting abundant blessings to our neighbor. We should express gratitude when another chooses to use their talents and abilities in service to God. We must remember that this allows others to see the goodness, kindness, and love of our Father in Heaven. It is another opportunity for the light of the Gospel to shine into a world of darkness. The Corinthians failed to understand this and nearly destroyed the church and its influence for good in their community. Like them, we must learn to love one another, to rejoice with one another, and to be grateful for one another.

## Growing Gratitude

Today, write out the words of the following passage. It illustrates this vital principle. The Christian should be grateful when God blesses his or her neighbor.

Luke 1:57-58 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

## Day 04

### Gratitude for Victory over the Grave

In the Bible, death is described as an enemy of man (1 Corinthians 15:26). It is pictured as a powerful and insatiable predator of men (Hosea 13:14; Proverbs 27:20; 30:15-16). It is a weapon used by Satan to keep men in fear and in bondage to him (Hebrews 2:14-15). It is an appointment that all men must keep (Hebrews 9:27).

Yet, Paul – on the road to Damascus – saw the resurrected Jesus. He who had been put to death on the cross was alive again! This proved to Paul that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. It proved to Paul that his persecution of the church was wrong. And, it proved to Paul that death had been defeated – conquered by the risen Savior!

The implications of this truth were undeniable. Since Jesus had been resurrected, all men could be raised as well. Through the power of the blood of Jesus, sin could be forgiven. Thus, there was nothing to fear in death! Satan's weapon of fear had been robbed of its power and the devil himself had been defeated.

Therefore, Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the resurrection: "*Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). Paul was grateful for victory over the grave!

In Christ, this victory is ours as well. Like Paul, we should give thanks to God for the victory He has secured for us over death. In our prayers and in our lives, let us express to God our gratitude for the hope and the promise of the resurrection.

## Growing Gratitude

Today, we will exercise our gratitude in song. There are many songs that remind us of the victory that we have because of the Lord's sacrifice for our sins. One of the most beautiful is "Victory In Jesus," written by Eugene M. Bartlett in 1939. Find your songbook or a copy of the lyrics and sing it loud! Meditate on the words and think about the victory we have in Jesus. Express your gratitude in song and in prayer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3wYarmL6xM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2DX9bYkqsM&list=LL&index=2>

Lyrics: [https://gracemusic.us/sheet\\_music/victory-in-jesus/](https://gracemusic.us/sheet_music/victory-in-jesus/)

*"BUT THANKS BE TO GOD, WHICH GIVETH US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST" (1 CORINTHIANS 15:57).*

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Day 05

Gratitude for Unity in the Church

*“I THANK GOD THAT I BAPTIZED NONE OF YOU, BUT CRISPUS AND GAIUS; LEST ANY SHOULD SAY THAT I HAD BAPTIZED IN MINE OWN NAME” (1 CORINTHIANS 1:14-15).*

This passage may be one of the strangest that we study in relation to gratitude. Was Paul thankful that he did not baptize people? Surely, Paul wanted to baptize as many people as possible! Why would he make such a statement?

Sadly, many who have a bias against baptism will misconstrue this passage to claim that baptism is not necessary for the remission of sins. They argue that if baptism is essential to salvation then Paul would not have been thankful for not baptizing many in Corinth. However, they miss the point that Paul was making.

Baptism is essential to salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:27; etc.). Who does the baptizing is not essential. The Lord Himself demonstrated this truth (John 4:1-2).

Paul was thankful that he had not personally baptized many in Corinth because they were using this as a means of division in the church. Some felt that the person by whom one was baptized determined how good or true a Christian one was (cf. 1:12-13). Paul did not want anyone to think that he had baptized in his own name. He was not creating followers for himself, but followers of Jesus!

The lesson is this: Paul desired unity in the church above all else – even if he did not get the credit for it. He was not seeking to make a name for himself nor to glorify himself. His desire was for God’s name to be honored and glorified. Thus, he was thankful that by his words and actions he had promoted unity in Christ.

Can we be grateful for the same? Do our actions encourage unity or division? Do we seek to honor God, ourselves, or some other man? Are we willing to suffer wrong from others to support unity in the church (cf. 1 Cor. 6:7)? Are we willing to allow someone else to receive the praise of men so long as the church is benefited? Like Paul, we must learn to be grateful for the good that others do for the cause of Christ.

## Growing Gratitude

Today, let us give thanks to God for the good works of others. Express our gratitude for our brethren who serve God in ways that we may not. But, let us also allow this gratitude for others motivate us to be more active in the service of the Lord.

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Day 06

Gratitude for Spiritual Gifts

The church at Corinth faced many challenges. Due to their spiritual immaturity and carnal attitudes, the church was being divided into numerous factions (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10-11; 3:1-4). One cause of division was their misunderstanding of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12 – 14).

These gifts were miraculous abilities given to Christians by the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by an Apostle of Jesus (cf. Acts 8:18; 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6; Galatians 3:5). Their purpose was to allow God's Word to be revealed and confirmed as Truth (cf. Mark 16:20; Acts 8:6; Hebrews 2:3-4). The goal of the use of these gifts was the strengthening of the church and its unity (1 Corinthians 12). Sadly, the Corinthians had made them a source of division.

There were different gifts given to different people. As a result, some felt that their gifts were greater than another's. Some believed that they were "better" Christians than others because of the miraculous ability they had received. Particularly, those who could speak in tongues (human languages they had not previously studied or learned) thought that their gift was greater than all others – making them the superior members of the church. Paul wrote to dispel this notion (1 Corinthians 14).

In the course of his argument, Paul declared: *"I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue"* (1 Corinthians 14:18-19). Paul was thankful for the spiritual gifts he had been granted by God.

Today, we do not possess and cannot receive miraculous abilities (1 Corinthians 13:8-13). However, we should still be thankful for them. We should be grateful that God gave them to men who received, wrote, and confirmed His Word. Those gifts give us confidence that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

We also should be thankful for the talents and abilities with which God has blessed us. If you can lead a song, thank God for the ability. If you can preach or teach, thank God for the talent. If you can serve in any way – great or small – thank God for His blessing in your life.

## Growing Gratitude

Today, exercise gratitude by honestly assessing your talents and abilities. What are you good at? How can it be of service to God? What areas can you grow and mature to be a better servant? What talent or ability can you develop more fully? Ask God to help you in those areas. Thank Him for all that you can do. Then, serve.

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Day 07

Gratitude for the Wisdom of God

The Book of Romans is a reasoned and logical argument for the power of the Gospel. Paul explains that all men are sinners and in need of salvation. Then, he explains that the Gospel is the only means of obtaining salvation – finding justification from sin. Therefore, all men can be saved, but they must obey the Gospel of Christ.

At the conclusion of his argument, Paul reflected back over everything that God did throughout the ages of the world to bring the Gospel to fruition. Considering God’s grand plan of redemption caused Paul to erupt in praise and wonder at the wisdom and knowledge of God. *“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen”* (Romans 11:33-36).

We should be filled with gratitude when we consider God’s hand in the history of the world. All that He did to bring Jesus into the world was for our benefit. With a plan that no man or angel could have conceived, God provided perfect salvation for lost and doomed mankind. We should be forever grateful for the wisdom of God. And, in gratitude, we should trust His wisdom for our lives. We obey the Gospel because we trust the One who gave it. After all that He has done for our salvation, how could we not express our gratitude in loving, faithful, trusting obedience?

## Growing Gratitude

Today, we will exercise our gratitude by praising God. Speak to Him in prayer with words that honor Him, His nature, His wisdom, and His majesty. Tell God how thankful you are for His plan of redemption and His powerful, providential hand. As taught by Jesus, express to Him that His is “the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever” (Matthew 6:13). Honor Him as “the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15-16). Declare, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (Revelation 5:13-14). Echo the words that are heard in Heaven: “Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments...” (Revelation 19:1-2). Express gratitude and give praise to God.

*“O THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES BOTH OF THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD!  
HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGMENTS, AND HIS WAYS PAST FINDING OUT!”*

(ROMANS 11:33)