

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Day 15

Gratitude for Brethren Who Are Grateful!

Paul was granted an amazing privilege by God. Though he was not a disciple of Jesus when the Lord was on the earth, Paul was allowed to record a statement made by Jesus that no other Bible writer documented. And what a statement it was! *“It is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35b).

This truth is important to remember when it comes to gratitude. It is a blessed thing to give gratitude to God and to others. Paul instructed Christians, *“Be ye thankful”* (Colossians 3:15b). He commanded, *“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving”* (Colossians 4:2). He wrote of evil things that should not once be named among Christians, *“but rather giving of thanks”* (Ephesians 5:4). Even our singing in worship is to involve *“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Ephesians 5:20). He declared, *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men”* (1 Timothy 2:1). And, of course, he charged, *“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Paul was grateful for brethren who were grateful! We must realize the blessedness of giving thanks. In our daily prayers, we should be thankful. In our worship assemblies, we should be thankful. In our personal devotionals, we should be thankful. At all times, in all situations, for all men – we should be thankful!

## Growing Gratitude

Today, to grow in gratitude we are going to express gratitude. Tell someone, “Thank you!” Whomever you choose, for whatever reason, state your gratitude to that person today. In the 30 days that lead up to the Thanksgiving holiday, we also celebrate Veterans’ Day. Is there any group of people who deserve our gratitude more than those who have fought to protect us and to secure our liberties? Today, thank a veteran – whether it is a family member, a friend, a neighbor, or a stranger you meet along the way. It is a blessing to give thanks – to the giver and to the one who receives.

Also, do not forget or neglect to express gratitude to God!

*“...[R]EMEMBER THE WORDS OF THE LORD JESUS, HOW HE SAID, ‘IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE’ (ACTS 20:35B).*

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

## Day 16

### Gratitude for Fellowship with Brethren – 1

*“But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you: Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. 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, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith? Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you” (1 Thessalonians 3:6-12).*

Paul was thankful to God for the fellowship he enjoyed with his brethren. Fellowship is a source of encouragement. It reminded Paul of the mutual faith and love that he shared with the church in Thessalonica. It reinforced the mutual affection they had for one another. It helped to motivate Paul to continue serving the Lord, even in difficult situations.

Fellowship is a source of comfort. Paul had sent Timothy to the Thessalonians to confirm and comfort them during a time of persecution. When he learned from Timothy that these brethren were standing strong and remaining faithful, they became a comfort to him. In the midst of testing and trial, they found comfort in their fellowship with one another.

Fellowship is a source of joy. Their faithfulness, which maintained their unity in Christ, was a source of joy for Paul. Thus, Paul expressed abundant gratitude to God for them. He prayed that God would allow them to be reunited, that they might enjoy personal fellowship again.

## Growing Gratitude

Today, we will exercise and grow in gratitude by memorizing a verse of Scripture. Romans 12:10 states: *“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another.”* This verse teaches that Christians are to fervently love one another and to lead the way in honoring our brethren. We should desire opportunities of fellowship with each other. Memorize this verse and meditate upon its meaning. Let us develop an attitude and mindset of desiring, even preferring the company of our brethren above all others.

*“NIGHT AND DAY PRAYING EXCEEDINGLY THAT WE MIGHT SEE YOUR FACE....”*  
(1 THESSALONIANS 3:10).

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

## Day 17

### Gratitude for Fellowship with Brethren – 2

*“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:3-8).*

Paul was thankful for the church in Philippi and the fellowship he enjoyed with them. These Christians were very close to the heart of Paul. Every time he thought of them, he expressed gratitude to God.

Fellowship is a source of support. The Philippians had helped Paul in his preaching of the Gospel from the first day they met him. They supported him as he defended the Gospel. They supported him when he was imprisoned for teach the Gospel. They supported him in all his labors (4:10-18). The word for fellowship means “join-participation.” They might not be able to travel with Paul or as he did, but they could participate in his work by supporting him. This is fellowship.

Fellowship is a source of confidence. Paul could have confidence in his work because he knew he was loved and supported by faithful brethren. Furthermore, he had confidence in them and in God’s blessings upon them. Their fellowship had allowed them to know one another and to learn to trust each other.

Fellowship is a source of affection. With godly emotion, Paul longed to see his brethren in Philippi. In fact, Paul desired to be with them with the same tender mercies that Jesus has for all mankind. All Christians must learn to love the brotherhood.

## Growing Gratitude

Today, we will grow in gratitude by giving thanks to God for the many opportunities we have to enjoy fellowship with our brethren. Pray for our brethren. Pray that we will have occasions to meet with one another to worship, to pray, to study, to serve, and to grow closer to each other. Think of ways that you can increase your love for your brothers and sisters in Christ. Then, we will support that fellowship by participating in it!

*“BUT I REJOICED IN THE LORD GREATLY, THAT NOW AT THE LAST YOUR CARE OF ME HATH FLOURISHED AGAIN...” (PHILIPPIANS 4:10).*

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

## Day 18

### Gratitude for Fellowship with Brethren – 3

Paul was taken by ship to Rome as a prisoner. He had appealed his legal case to Caesar and was to stand trial. As he journeyed, a terrible storm besieged the ship, causing it to wreck upon the island of Melita. After three months, they were finally able to leave the island and reach Italy.

Paul declared: *“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.”* (Acts 28:15). After being separated from his brethren for so long, Paul expressed gratitude when he was able to enjoy spiritual fellowship once again.

The fellowship of his brethren filled Paul with courage. He had courage to complete his journey. He had courage to face his trial. He had courage to continue preaching the Gospel and living the Christian life. Paul may have done these things anyway, but the fellowship of faithful brethren gave him strength and lightened the burden.

It is important to remember that Paul did not take the fellowship of his brethren for granted. He personally expressed his gratitude toward those who partnered with him in living for and serving the Lord. *“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.”* (Romans 16:3-4). Paul was not ashamed to say, “Thank you,” to those who helped and encouraged him along the way. He instructs all Christians to be thankful and to express their gratitude to God and to their brethren.

*“FOR THE BODY IS NOT ONE MEMBER, BUT MANY”* (1 CORINTHIANS 12:14).

## Growing Gratitude

Today, we will grow in gratitude by two exercises. First, sing and meditate upon the words of the song, “We Gather Together,” written by Adrianus Valerius in 1626. This song has come to be associated with Thanksgiving because it speaks of gathering together. As we reflect upon the meaning of this song, we will also think of all the blessings we receive by gathering with the saints. List what you would miss most dearly if you could not meet with your brethren. Then, give thanks to God that you can!

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| 2. _____ | 6. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 7. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 8. _____ | 12. _____ |

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

## Day 19

### Gratitude for Brethren Who Pray

*“Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf” (2 Corinthians 1:11).*

Paul wrote to the Corinthians about how he had learned to trust in God. He stated that he felt in himself that he had a “sentence of death.” Yet, God delivered him from his enemies and from death. However, there was another source of help – their prayers to God on Paul’s behalf.

Paul believed in the power of prayer. He was sure that the prayers of his brethren had helped him in his time of suffering and moved God to deliver him. Thus, Paul was thankful for brethren who prayed.

The gift of his deliverance had been bestowed upon him by many who had labored together in prayer. Now, all those who had prayed for Paul would give thanks for his victory! The brethren who had made requests in prayer would now give thanks in prayer. In fact, the word for ‘persons’ actually refers to ‘faces.’ Their joyful expressions would demonstrate their gratitude to God as they gave thanks for His answer to their prayers.

There are three important lessons to learn from this verse. [1] We should be people of prayer. We should make requests on behalf of others (cf. Acts 12:5; Phil. 1:19). [2] We should give thanks when God answers our prayers. We must never forget to express gratitude for the good gifts of God. [3] We should be thankful for our brethren who pray for us. We should not be afraid to let others know when we need their prayers. We should let others know when prayers have been answered. Then, we all should be thankful to God.

## Growing Gratitude

Today, we will exercise in gratitude by focusing on prayer. Think of brothers and sisters who need our prayers. Then, pray for them by name concerning their specific situation.

Also, think of those prayers that God has answered. Think of those for whom you have prayed and their situation has improved. Then, give thanks to God for His answered prayers. Be specific. Express genuine gratitude. Be thankful for the power and privilege of prayer

*“BRETHREN, PRAY FOR US” (1 THESSALONIANS 5:25).*

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

## Day 20

### Gratitude for Brethren Who Serve

Titus was a diligent worker and loyal helper of Paul. He was also a faithful servant of the church, helping several congregations. Because of his heart of service, Paul was thankful for Titus.

*“But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you”* (2 Corinthians 8:16-17).

Paul was thankful to God for Titus. He was grateful that Titus had a heart filled with earnest, diligent care for his brethren. He gave thanks that Titus accepted his appeal. But Titus went even further in showing his earnest care – he voluntarily went to see and help the Corinthians.

Paul was grateful for brethren who serve. We should be servants because we have heard and accepted the teaching of Scripture (Matthew 20:26-28). We should be servants because we have love and care in our hearts for our brethren (Galatians 5:13). We should be servants because we voluntarily give our lives to the Lord and His work (Isaiah 6:8; 1 Corinthians 9:16-17; 1 Peter 5:2).

Like Paul, we should be thankful for brethren who serve. Where would the local congregation be without Bible class teachers, song leaders, building cleaners, those who prepare the Lord’s supper, those who maintain the facilities, those who make phone calls and send cards, those who prepare food, those who send flowers, those who serve in so many ways that so often go unnoticed? We need to thank God for those brethren and for their service.

## Growing Gratitude

Today, we will grow in gratitude by being a servant. Determine today to perform a random act of kindness – or, rather, a random act of service. Think of someone that you can do something for just to serve them. Have your eyes and heart open for opportunities to do a good deed for someone. Some deed of kindness or service, no matter how small or large, can remind us of all we have to be thankful.

*“ALSO I HEARD THE VOICE OF THE LORD, SAYING, ‘WHOM SHALL I SEND, AND WHO WILL GO FOR US?’ THEN SAID I, ‘HERE AM I; SEND ME’”* (ISAIAH 6:8).

# Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Day 21

Gratitude for Brethren Who Give

*“Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men”* (2 Corinthians 9:11-13).

Much of the book of 2 Corinthians has to do with giving. The Christians in Judah and Jerusalem were facing a difficult time of need. Christians in other parts of the world were better off and able to help their brethren in trying circumstances. Paul was collecting the money which many churches and Christians had voluntarily contributed to help the poor saints in Jerusalem.

Paul encouraged these brethren to give purposefully, bountifully, willingly, and cheerfully. He reminded them that God would take care of them and provide for them. God would enrich them so they could continue to manifest generosity. The result would be thanksgiving to God – by Paul and by the many who would be helped by their gift. Furthermore, it would cause the Jewish Christians to glorify God when they saw the true conversion and obedience of Gentiles who had also become Christians. In all things, God would be thanked and praised.

Thus, Paul was filled with gratitude for brethren who gave. We should be thankful for the same. Those who give liberally allow the work of the local church to be accomplished, the evangelism of the world to be undertaken, and the defense of the Truth to be achieved. All Christians should be sacrificial givers. All Christians should be thankful for brethren who are cheerful givers.

## Growing Gratitude

Today, we will grow in gratitude by memorizing and meditating on 2 Corinthians 9:7 – *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”* Think seriously about the meaning of this verse. We are to purpose our giving – plan it out, budget for it. We are to give freely, because we want to give. We are to be glad to give of our means to help the Lord’s work. Memorize this verse and consider your giving. Does it truly express gratitude to God?

*“BUT THIS I SAY, ‘HE WHICH SOWETH SPARINGLY SHALL REAP ALSO SPARINGLY;  
AND HE WHICH SOWETH BOUNTIFULLY SHALL REAP ALSO BOUNTIFULLY”*  
(2 CORINTHIANS 9:6).