

Tell Me Why I Can Be Thankful

by Carter Conlon

This sermon emphasizes the importance of cultivating a thankful spirit in all circumstances, drawing inspiration from the Apostle Paul's life of gratitude despite immense trials and challenges. It highlights the faithfulness of God in every situation, encouraging believers to focus on God's goodness and promises, and to trust that all things work together for good. The message concludes with an invitation to commit one's life to Christ and experience the transformative power of His love and faithfulness.

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Scripture: Philippians 4:6, Romans 8:28, 2 Timothy 1:12, Psalm 18:6, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Romans 8:38

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Description

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Transcript

This week, Pastor Teresa and I were getting some groceries for Thanksgiving to be able to cook with our family. And there was a young man at the cash register, this is only a couple of days ago, and she said to him, Happy Thanksgiving. Are you looking forward to the day? And he looked at her and he said, No, I'm not.

He said, I have nothing at all to be thankful for. And my family is a disaster. And there's there's just nothing happening in my home.

And he said, and she said, all that's she started speaking to him, I didn't catch all the words, but she just said it's, it's so sad that you don't feel you have something you can give thanks for. And then he said, not only me, he said, I don't have a single friend and I don't know a single person, my age, that is thankful today for has any reason to give thanks. And we were so burdened by that, I went home and I started thinking about what this young man had said, and I was so burdened for him that I went back the next day just to buy some ice cream.

So I have a chance perhaps to speak to him again. And I'm going to go back again. I want to encourage this young man.

He seems like such a nice young man and just has no reason to give thanks. He has no reason for hope. He's been robbed of the truth of God.

And for those of us who do know Christ, if ever there was a time for you and I to be thankful, it's now. If ever there was a time to cultivate a thankful spirit, not just on Thanksgiving, but every day of our lives, this is the time to do that. I want to speak in some measure this evening and talk to you on the topic of why, tell me why I can be thankful.

You know, there's a reason for Christians to be thankful. Paul the apostle was one of the most thankful people, I think in the new Testament. He seemed to be giving thanks.

He seemed to be giving praise all the days of his life, right down to the end. Even when he says, I've run my course, I've finished the race. There's laid up for me a crown of righteousness and not for me only, but all those that have loved is appearing.

Yet you look at the life of Paul. He had suffered the loss in a sense of all things in this world. He had forfeited his reputation, his former academic achievements, his religious achievements.

He said, I count all of this, but rubbish in the sight of God for what I have found in Christ Jesus. Paul the apostle was betrayed, beaten, imprisoned, shipwrecked, stoned. He had to stand before rulers and kings that were insane.

Caesar in particular, thinking he was God, and obviously he wasn't. But Paul was commissioned of God to stand before him. He was sent on a ship that was going to sink.

He spent some time in the water, swimming towards shore. When he gathered wood, he was bit by a snake as he put wood on the fire. It just doesn't get any worse when you look at this man's life and you just say, how did he ever cultivate a thankful spirit? But yet he did.

When you read the life of Paul through the scriptures, you can't help but see this man was always rejoicing. Even on the deck of a perishing ship in Acts chapter 27, he was able to take bread. You've got to picture this.

I actually had a Disney artist do a picture for me that's on my wall at home of a man standing on the deck of a ship that's starting to go under the water. He's got a loaf of bread and he's doing this in front of all 275 sailors with him. The scripture says he gave thanks to God.

Can you imagine? You're on a ship. The deck of it is going down. You're about to go into the ocean.

The sea is so rough that it has the capability of breaking this boat in pieces. You're in a cold, foreboding, unfamiliar place. You are a prisoner.

The only word you have from God is you're going to be taken to stand before Caesar, who was highly immoral and was deluded. Caesar at that time thought he was God. Paul's commission was to stand before this man.

I believe just to testify to him, no, you aren't God. There is another God who is God. I want to take a look at the words of Paul.

Before I do, there's one thing I want to give thanks for tonight. We got a prayer request on November the 17th. It came in at 2.53 in the morning, our time, Eastern time, from Cork, Ireland.

Here was the prayer request. I feel like there is no hope for me. That's a prayer request.

Somebody just took the time to type it in or text it in and just sent it in to us to pray for them. Then on the same day, November 17th at 9.33 AM, so roughly six and a half hours later from the same person, he says, I just prayed a prayer to receive Jesus. Please pray for my going forward.

Six and a half hours later, the answer to the prayer request came in. I have no doubt that was a long night for this person, this young person. Thank God they found Christ as Savior.

I thank God. Father, I just want to thank you for this person in Cork, Ireland. I don't know who it is, but God, you do.

Somebody who was up in the middle of the night saying, I can't see a way forward, but by dawn, by the morning, that way had appeared through Jesus Christ. Thank you, God, for your mercy. You heard that cry.

That person is most likely all alone in their room, but you heard the cry. You came to them and shone light into that darkened place. For this today, we are thankful, God, for our value system is not locked into the things of this world.

Our value system is in line with yours. You died on the cross, not for things. You died there for people.

God, thank you that you've allowed us to have your heart. You've allowed us to have your value system. Thank you, Lord, that you put it on my heart to keep going back to that store and keep speaking to that young clerk until one day thankfulness will come into his heart.

I do pray for the words to speak. I thank you for the heart to want to go. God, I just thank you, Lord.

I thank you, Lord, Jesus Christ. It's not about numbers. It's about people, individual people.

Thank you for this great grace. Lord, you had crowds around you everywhere you went, but you heard one cry and you would stop and say, bring that person to me. Time and time again, Lord, you showed us the value of a soul.

So God, would you help us as your people to get our eyes off of largesse and numbers and help us to get our eyes on what really matters. The people that we meet every day as we travel through this world, oh God, don't let us be callous towards their cry and towards their need. Father, thank you that you will enable us.

You'll give us the giftings to make a difference, Lord, in somebody's life somewhere. God, somehow, just a word spoken. Lord Jesus Christ, and you'll give us the wisdom and the ability to speak what needs to be said.

Lord, I thank you for it. I thank you with all of my heart. I do pray, God, for that young man.

Oh, Jesus, my heart just went out to him. He just sees no reason to have hope, no reason to give thanks, and all of his friends the same. God, this generation is robbed of truth and light.

God, help us to help them. That's all I can say, Lord. Make a way.

Make a way, living God. Make a way. And I thank you that you will.

I thank you, Lord. You hear this cry, and you said in your word, whatever I ask, believing, I shall receive. So, God, I'm asking you tonight that you make a way that I can reach this young man.

Make a way that I can speak to him and maybe to his friends as well. God Almighty. God Almighty.

God Almighty. God Almighty. I say, thank you tonight.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

In Jesus' name, amen and amen. Give me a reason. Could you bring my glasses, please? They should be in the, you know, they say there are two things that happen when you get old.

Number one, you lose your memory. Number two, I don't remember the second thing. Tell me why.

Thank you, Ross, by the way. Thank you. Tell me why I can be thankful.

Philippians chapter four, we're going to look at the words of Paul in large measure in this because he had a thankful spirit. Philippians chapter four, beginning at verse six, Paul says, be anxious for nothing. We could just stop there and give an altar call, couldn't we, right now? Be anxious for nothing.

In other words, don't let your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions.

I go to prepare a place for you that where I am, there you may be also. Don't worry about what you're going to eat, what you're going to wear, where you're going to live, for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things, but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. Be anxious for nothing.

I remember the time in 1990 that our house burnt to the ground and Pastor Teresa and I, we had three children and we lost everything, but thank God our children were spared because you can replace things, but you cannot replace your children. And I thank God that he put it in my heart. I remember we were, we had no house to call our own.

We had no clothes for our children. We had lost every, absolutely everything. Nothing was salvaged at all from this house.

And I remember in January of that year, going out for a jog one day, and I said these words, I said, well, Lord, I've done what you asked me to do. I've sought you first and your kingdom and your righteousness. And you said that all these things will be added unto you.

So Lord, I'm just putting it all in your hands. That's all I can do. And I'm not going to carry it because you don't want me to carry it.

And I went out for a jog and I tell you, by the time February, March came around, you just wouldn't believe the blessing that came into our lives. Every day, every day, every day, a van would arrive with clothes, a letter come in the mailbox every day, every day, every day. It was absolutely amazing.

By the time it was all over, we were able to buy a brand new house. We paid cash for it. We had no debt.

Well, we had owned our other home without debt as well. New furniture, new appliances, new clothing. And I even got a pair of skates I'd always wanted and never could afford.

So God had been so good to us. He's been so good to us. And we've lost everything more than once and God's given it all back.

And I've learned over the years not to be anxious for anything, not to be anxious, not to put my value system or trust in things of this world because they can be taken away in a moment of time. But the faithfulness of God will never fail us. But in everything, be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there's anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do.

And the God of peace will be with you. So Paul was saying, I've taken a journey. And from my hand and from my mouth, you have learned some things about God.

And from the things that God gave me to share with you Philippian Christians, you have received some of the things that God put on my heart to speak to you. You've also heard yourselves of the faithfulness of God over the years. And you've heard of in days past how he brought people out of impossible situations.

How he's been a protector, a warrior, a provider, a defender. You've heard it. You heard it tonight.

Many who are listening in tonight, you heard it when Pastor Ross got up and shared those praise reports. And then Paul says, lastly, and you saw it in me. You saw the peace that God gives.

Now Paul was a prime example. I mean, I don't know anybody in the Bible, other than the cross itself, that was ever suffered more than the Apostle Paul did. It just seemed like his life was this constant beating.

That was most likely the thorn in measure, at least it was brought into his life to keep him humble in the sight of God. And he says, the things that you learned, you received, you heard, and you saw, do these things and the God of peace will be with you. The number one lesson from the life of the Apostle Paul is that God has been faithful.

God has been faithful. You know, we have a tendency as people to get all engrossed in the problems of the present day and we forget what God has done in the past. That's the human tendency.

I've walked through flood, fire, trial, sickness. I've experienced miracles in my life. I've seen the provision of God, the absolute miraculous provision of God, but yet human nature causes us to want to focus on the ingrown toenail that we have today.

The small little thing or that thing that's come to trouble us. And they will always, in this world, you shall have tribulation. You're going to have troubles every day.

And if you don't have trouble today, just wait for tomorrow. There will be troubles come. There'll be bad news in the mail.

There'll be a bill you can't pay, at least not immediately. And Paul, the Apostle, the thing we learned is that God has been faithful. Thank God for that.

Think about the things that God has done in your life. Think about what you would be if Christ had not revealed himself to you. Think about where you would be.

You could be in hell right now tonight if Christ had not revealed his mercy to you. And if you have nothing else to be thankful for, be thankful for that tonight. God, I'm still here on planet earth.

I'm still living, still breathing. I still can read your word. I still have hope in my heart.

I still have this understanding that heaven is going to be my eternal home. I have been washed clean by the blood that you shed on the cross. And God, if that's all you ever do for me, that's good enough.

I'm thankful, Lord, for it. I'm thankful for my redemption. I'm thankful that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that's going to be revealed through each of our lives one day, not too far down the road, might I add.

The glory, Paul said, these are only momentary sufferings and don't compare them with the glory. They're not worthy to be compared with the glory. This incredible newness of life that will be ours, this incredible explosion of knowledge in our minds, abilities will be given.

Scripture tells us when we get there, we will know as we are known. There'll be this mind given to us, abilities given by God. As a matter of fact, we will be the showcase of God forever.

A mystery that the angels desire to look into. With all that God has and all that God is, with all the created beings right now around his throne going, holy, holy, holy. The whole earth is full of his glory.

With all that's going on in heaven right now, he's not even looking at it. Most of the time he's peering down over the balcony of heaven at us. A mystery.

We must look like an ant colony to those that are in heaven. Our frailties, our weaknesses, our faults, and our struggles, and yet the center of God's affection is on us. I don't know how to fully explain that, but I can tell you I'm thankful.

I can tell you that my heart bursts with joy. I said, God, it is an awesome thing to know that we are the center of your affection. You have been faithful.

David, the psalmist in Psalm 18 verse 6 said, in my distress I called upon the Lord and cried out to my God and he heard my voice from his temple. My cry came before him even to his ears. David was surrounded by enemies, surrounded by death, and division, and weakness, and yet he called up to God and God heard him.

In first Samuel chapter 30 verse 6, in one of the worst seasons of his life, when people around David wanted to stone him for the mistakes, he had made terrible mistakes. Fear had taken over his life, and instead of faith, and he had gone into the enemy's camp, and he had made some terrible mistakes, and it cost him for a season his family, and it cost everybody who followed him their families and their goods as well. There was murmuring going on on every side, but the scripture says David strengthened himself in God, and strengthening himself in God, I believe he just went back and revisited the faithfulness of God.

He remembered that battle with Goliath. He remembered the lion. He remembered the bear.

He remembered Samuel walking into his father's house and pouring that horn of oil upon his head. He remembered the anointing of the spirit when God's Holy Spirit came upon him. He remembered the promises of God that were spoken to him that one day you will rule, and you will reign as a physical, natural king in the nation of Israel, a Christ type in a sense as well, and David strengthened himself, and there are times in our lives that we've got to remember that God has been faithful.

Instead of focusing on our present failures and struggles and trials, remember who God is. Remember what God has done, and my brother, my sister, remember the promises of God that he has spoken to you and over your life. That's why Paul says whatever things are true, are noble, are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things have good report, if there's any virtue, if there's anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things.

As believers in Christ, we have to train our minds to focus on what is good, and what is right, and what is true, and what is eternal, and what has virtue, and what is praiseworthy, and what is forever, and what is God. Otherwise we have a tendency to get focused on the little things that are so small in comparison to the greatness of our God, and those little things have a tendency to take away our joy, and can bring us to a place where we're not thankful for the presence of God even in our lives. Secondly, we learn through Paul that God is faithful.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 13 that there's no temptation or testing, other translations say, that has come your way that is not common to man. God will not allow you to be tested or tempted beyond what you could bear, but with that trial will make a way for you to bear it, lest you should be overpowered. God will be with you through your trial, through your difficulty.

Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 4, let me just read it to you. The testimony of Paul, 2 Corinthians 4, 6 to 10, we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed.

We're perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed. Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also might be manifested in our body. Carrying about this understanding within us that Christ died for us, Christ rose from the dead, Christ triumphed over everything that will ever come against any of us.

And yes, we will be hard-pressed, we will be perplexed at times, we will be persecuted, even struck down, but in the midst of these things, the promise of God is we will not be crushed, we'll not be left in despair, we'll never be forsaken, and we will most certainly never be destroyed. God has interwoven the very honor of his name in keeping us. Hallelujah.

It's dishonoring to God if one of his children is overpowered, because he has interwoven the honor of his name, his promises to be our protector, our keeper, our provider, the one who brings us home, the one who will not let us be tested beyond what we can endure, the one who will keep us in trials and challenges, and no matter what we have to face in the future. He says, I will never leave you or forsake you. I will provide for you whatever it is that you need as you seek first my kingdom and my righteousness.

And lastly, we learn through the apostle Paul that the same God who is faithful, who has been faithful, will be faithful right to the end. Hallelujah, hallelujah. And I hope that brings hope into your heart tonight.

God will be faithful to you, my friend. God will be. He cannot be anything other than what he is, and that's who he is, and that's what he is.

He is faithful. Listen to the words of Paul in Romans chapter 8, beginning at verse 28. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God and to those who are called according to his purpose.

All things, all things. You know how that verse has kept me over the years? All things work together. No matter what comes my way, that scripture comes back to me and tells me that there might be something in this I don't understand, but all things that God allows in my life are working together for good.

Some things I don't like, but they're building character. Some things I don't like, but they're leading me to a place of deeper trust. Other things I don't like, but they're causing me to come to a place where I'm going to have to lean more on him for the strength that I'm going to need.

But I know this one thing, after all these years of walking with God, all things. I can't think of one thing that came into my life that didn't have a divine purpose in it. God was in it.

God was in the sickness. God was in the trial. God was in the fire.

God was in the flood. God was in the good times. God was in the hard times.

God was in the bad times. God was in the times where I felt like dancing and rejoicing. All things have worked together for good, and that brings a stability into the Christian's life.

It makes me able to give thanks. It makes me able to give thanks when I'm in the valley and not just on the mountaintop, when I'm confused and not just living in a place of understanding the things that are going on in my life. I can give thanks because all things are working together for good.

Now, for whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he predestined, these he also called, and whom he called, he justified, and whom he justified, he glorified. What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? It really says it so simply.

If God didn't withhold his son, why would he withhold anything from his children, from those who have trusted his son for their redemption? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword? As it is written, for your sake we're killed all the day long, we're accounted as sheep for the slaughter, but in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am persuaded, and I hope you are tonight as well, neither death, nor life, nor

angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Nothing, nothing can separate any of us here from the love of God. Are you thankful for that tonight? Do you feel like rejoicing tonight? Just giving thanks and looking away from the momentary trials, the momentary struggles, the momentary confusions and saying, God, you are faithful, you will be faithful, you have been faithful, you can't be anything other than faithful.

And lastly, Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1.12, I'm convinced he's able to keep what I've committed to him against that day. Everything I've put in the hands of God, that means my children that I once dedicated to him, that means my family that I'm praying for, that means my future, that means everything that's dear to my heart that I've placed in the hands of God, he is able to keep that until the day it's all deposited in heaven at the throne of God. And for that, I am so, so thankful.

Not everything is not the way I'd like it to be yet. When I look around and I just see some people not maybe doing the things they should be doing, but I'm not sitting at home wringing my hand saying, oh dear, oh my, what am I going to do? No, I've placed it in the hands of God. And I said, God, you are able, and you are faithful, and you will keep that which I've committed to you.

I don't have to not, I don't have to see it, even the Psalmist David said, even though my house is not fully the way I believed it would be, as God spoke it to me, yet, yet, even in this, I will trust in God and believe in God. Hallelujah. Thankfully.

And so the question tonight for those that are listening online is, have you committed yourself to him? He's able to keep you if you will put yourself in the hands of God. Have you given your life to him? Have you opened your heart and said, Jesus, come into my life and be my Lord and Savior? I can't save myself. I can't change myself.

I've tried, and it always fails. I invite you, Lord Jesus Christ, to come into my life and be the Lord and Savior of my life. Believe that he died in your place, and because of his sacrifice, that sin in your life, the wrong things you've done, which the Bible calls sin, that have separated you from God, is now blotted out.

It's washed away, and you are now made a child of God, not just for time, but for all of eternity. Have you committed yourself to him? Can you say with your lips, Jesus Christ is my Lord? There was somebody in Ireland on the 17th that did that. After a long night of struggle, in the morning said, Jesus, I give you my life.

I give you my life. Most likely had been watching after hours this prayer meeting, because it looks like the prayer request came in in the middle of the struggle. Hallelujah.

Pray these words with me. If you're online tonight or in the sanctuary, I don't know absolutely everybody here, but if you don't know Christ as your Savior, be thankful that he loves you, he died for you, and that he wants you to be his child. Let's pray these words together.

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for loving me. Thank you for dying for me and paying the price for the wrong things that I have done. Tonight, I open my heart to you, and I invite you to come into my life to be my Lord and my Savior.

I don't understand it all, but I know you died for me, because you love me. I know you went to a cross, because you want me. You actually want me, just the way that I am, to cleanse me, and to walk with me all the days of my life.

So, Jesus Christ, I thank you tonight. This Thanksgiving, I thank you for saving me, and for becoming my God, and for letting me become your child. I give you praise, and I give you glory for this.

From this day forward, I will follow you as you lead me. Help me, in Jesus' name, amen and amen.

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