

Thanks!

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the vital connection between faith and thanksgiving in the Christian life.

Duration: 35:03

Scripture: Colossians 2:6

Topics: "Thanksgiving"

Description

In this sermon, the pastor begins by expressing gratitude and encouraging the congregation to give thanks to God for His mercy and faithfulness. He emphasizes that God will never leave or forsake His people, even in difficult times. The pastor reflects on his own life and sees God's mercy and grace in every situation. He urges the congregation to remember the goodness of God and to forget the negative things that weigh them down, focusing instead on the times when God has answered prayers and brought them through challenging circumstances.

Transcript

In the book of Colossians, we have a portion of scripture in the second chapter, where if you have your Bibles, we'll look at it on the screen in a second, but if you'd like to turn to it, Colossians 2, verse six, just verse six and seven. So then, just as you received Christ, Jesus, as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith, as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. Just look at your Bible or look at me.

So then, just as you received Christ, Jesus, as Lord, continue to live in him, in fellowship, communion with him, rooted, going down into him, built up in him, strengthened, he has the foundation. Now, strengthened in the faith, as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. Paul is writing to a church that he never visited.

Usually, when he writes the letters, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, when he writes to the church at Rome or Philippi, and in Ephesus, where he spent three years, he's writing to people that he knows. Now, he's writing to a church that he heard about, but he has such a big heart, the apostle Paul, that he's praying for them and he's telling them a lot of good things, because they're being attacked by false doctrine in Colossae, and he wants to keep them on the right road. So let's just look at this one more time, these two little verses, okay? So then, just as you received Christ, Jesus, as Lord, just as you received him, when you started out, you put your faith in him, you became a Christian.

Now, continue to live in him, trusting him, in communion with him, link to him, every moment of every day, rooted and built up in him, because he's the source of everything, so you gotta be rooted in him, like the soil, you have to be built up in him, like a building has a foundation. Now, strengthened in the faith, as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. Strengthened in the faith, overflowing with thankfulness.

Let's take out, as you were taught, because that's not an important reference here, but strengthened in the faith, overflowing with thankfulness. Say that, read those two phrases. Strengthened in the faith, overflowing with, say it again, strengthened in the faith, overflowing with thankfulness.

Everyone knows that Christianity, I hope everyone knows that Christianity is a religion based not on performance and self-effort, but on faith. The just shall live by faith. That truth of trusting God, and through that faith, being accepted by him, having a righteousness given to us that is not our own, the righteousness of Christ, no one's going to heaven because they've lived a good life, that's for sure.

But Christianity is miraculous and marvelous because it says, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. Every other religion says, do this and do that. Even the Old Testament teaches, under the law, do this and you'll live.

Don't do it, and you'll be punished. But Christianity is a revelation of a different kind because it says, referring back to the Old Testament covenant with Abraham, and Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. What was counted to him? His faith.

He broke down and made mistakes, but God accepted him and counted him righteous because of his faith in the promises of God. So the message of the gospel was, turn away from your sin, repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. I know, but what do I have to do? What does Karen have to do to make sure she goes to heaven? Nothing.

Just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. So that faith is the key to everything. The Bible says that you shall live by what? By faith.

Without what is it impossible to please God? Without faith. Most of us have an instinct when things go bad, we try harder. But Christianity is about trusting, no matter what.

Peter says that Christians are kept and protected by the power of God through faith. The mechanism that brings the protection of God is faith. So faith is the thing Jesus was amazed at when he saw it.

He never was impressed by anybody's righteousness or their wisdom or their wealth, but whoa, when he saw faith, when the centurion said, you don't have to come to my house, just say the word and everything will be right. He went, what? Disciples, he's not even a Jew, but I've never seen faith like this in all of Israel. So faith is the school that we're all in and you can't drop out.

If you're a Christian, God's intention today is he's gonna want to teach you to trust him more because he so enjoys and is delighted by people trusting. And faith is what keeps us, Paul says, I have fought the good fight of faith. When in a spiritual warfare, put up the shield of faith.

Faith, everything is faith. Satan knows that, so he attacks faith. He's negative, he tries to pull us down, he tries to distract us, he tries to do anything.

Come on, we've all experienced that. He wants to erode our faith. Self-effort and promising you'll try harder and do better, he'll encourage you to do that.

He likes you to try that because he knows it's a dead end because we're weak. So he says, keep trying, sooner or later we'll get disillusioned or we'll give up. But oh, when we start trusting, woo, then he's got to attack, got to attack.

So Paul, writing this letter, says, and it's for all of us here, you got to be strengthened in your faith. Just like you received Christ, you put your trust in him, you had faith to begin, now you got to grow in faith. You have to be strengthened in faith.

Faith doesn't stay stagnant. People's faith grows or it ebbs. Some people lose their faith.

I got a call from a woman in another part of the country just this week and she said to me, can you help me? I'm having a crisis of faith. I'm not sure, maybe I lost my faith. Karen was just saying the opposite.

I never lost my faith. But people have lost their faith. People have grown in faith.

From faith to faith, from glory to glory, from faith to more faith. So God is going to permit situations in our lives so that we can grow in faith because we stand by faith. We walk by faith, not by sight.

So I don't care what your intention might be or what I would like to have happen in my life. You might be pursuing the American dream. God's not after the American dream for you.

God is after faith. Faith. So that being the target of the enemy, Paul writes and says you got to be strengthened in faith.

But here's the odd juxtaposition that we're not used to. He links faith with something in the sentence that we don't usually relate. Strengthened in the faith overflowing with thanksgiving.

I'll use thanksgiving since it's coming up soon instead of thankfulness. We all know what thanksgiving means. So listen again.

Strengthened in the faith. You got to grow and be strengthened in the faith. And by the way, along with it, overflowing with thanksgiving.

Why would he link that? Because thanksgiving has everything to do with your faith. A lot of us might have struggled or are struggling right now today with faith. Struggling to believe God and we are trying to believe harder but we don't realize the importance of thanksgiving in the development of faith.

In fact, you can't grow in faith unless your life is overflowing with thanksgiving. Listen, why a lot of ministers and people and men and women don't grow in faith is their life is not filled and overflowing with thanksgiving. You can't have one without the other.

You'll never meet a person overflowing with thanksgiving who's not a person of faith. You'll never meet a man or a woman of faith who's grumpy and complaining and negative. Impossible, impossible.

Men and women of faith are always men and women filled with thanksgiving. People filled with thanksgiving are always men and women of faith. Why is that so? Well, let's just analyze the word quickly.

Thanksgiving, our English word thanksgiving, comes from an Anglo-Saxon root that is thinking, not thanking. The word thanking comes from an Anglo-Saxon root that means thinking. And we chined the I to an A and we got thanking.

And then out of thanking or thanks, we got thanksgiving. Because what is thanksgiving? For my brothers and sisters that are here, all of us, for my spiritual daughter here, Pam, I just looked at and think of the battles she's fought in life and overcome and been such a blessing. Thanksgiving is linked to thinking because what is thanking? You think back on some blessing or some mercy and by thinking about it, you react and you start thanking.

All thanksgiving comes from thinking. Nobody thanks God, you have to think. You think back on something God did and it's a reminder to get out of the dumps and stop being negative and stop being a victim and all that other business and say, wait a minute, God has been good in the past, God is gonna be good in the future.

Come on, let's say amen. Now, Satan does not like that. So God, knowing how important this is, has reminders in the Old Testament constantly.

Think of the feasts of the Hebrew calendar. All the feasts, the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Pentecost, the harvest, all these feasts, all the sacrifices or songs and certain prayers were reminders, think back what God has done. He's the one who gave you the harvest.

So as we celebrate this feast, it's a reminder, look what God did this past year. He brought us through and they're over and over in the Bible. They kept David's sword that he killed Goliath with, why? Not to be worshiped, which unfortunately is the temptation, but as a reminder.

See that sword? Oh, yeah. Oh, what is that sword? Oh, that's the one that the boy used when he killed Goliath. Oh, he killed Goliath? Yeah, because God was with him.

Oh God, we praise you. You used David's sword that he cut, I should say, Goliath's head off with, not the sword he used, he hurled a rock at him. But they kept that.

They kept that. It's a reminder. 12 stones from the Jordan River were kept and brought to Gilgal, why? A reminder, God brought us over.

The water separated. God's been good to us up till now. We got to remember, remember.

There are certain things the Bible says to forget. Forgetting those things that are behind. But the Bible says also, remember, remember.

Well, which do you forget? Which do you remember? You forget those things that pull you down. You forget those negative things people have done. You forget the moments of failure.

You forget those things that are behind. You forget your sins. God forgot them, what are you thinking about them for? But there are things to remember.

Oh, I remember that day he brought me through. I remember that time he answered prayer. I remember that time when I was backed up against the wall.

Anybody here with me on this? I was backed up against the wall, didn't know how we would pay the bills, but God came through. God delivered me. Everybody, come on, let's put our hands together.

We have those reminders. Why those reminders? Why those reminders? To make us think in su cabeza, think. Think of the good things.

Think about his love. Think about his mercy. Why? Because by thinking, you will begin to thank.

And without thanksgiving, your faith can't grow. Impossible. Thanksgiving, when we give God thanksgiving, it strengthens our faith during difficult moments when things are really hard.

See, most of us think that thanksgiving is something when you feel thankful. Thanksgiving has nothing to do with feeling. It's a sacrifice.

It's a choice. It's an act of the will. I decide to thank God.

You decided to come to church today. No wind brought you here. You woke up and said, I'm going to church today.

That's why you're here. That's how thanksgiving works. I decide to thank God because I know that during the difficult moments of life, when it's really hard, the worst thing you can do is complain.

The best thing you can do, I think. What do you thank God for? You're in the midst of a mess. I know, but he's been good to me all through my life.

God, I thank you, Lord. I'm remembering your mercies. Come on, everybody.

Say hallelujah while you clap your hand. So that strengthens your faith. Well, of course it strengthens my faith.

When I think about what God has done in the past, that's not going to help me believe for the future. Well, of course, remembering what he's done in the past is going to help me believe today. And if you're not thanking God and remembering those good things and praising them, faith is almost impossible.

Grumpy, negative people never have faith. People are always seeing the glass half empty, never remembering the past mercies, always counting their problems, never counting their blessing. You ever meet some people, they're so negative that when they leave you, you feel like you need to go to a prayer meeting or get hands laid on you or read the Bible or something.

Come on, how many know what I'm talking about? Everything is down, down, negative, heavy spirit. Where would you find that in the Bible? No, the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5, 18, in everything, give thanks, for this is the will of God. I wonder how many of us are living out of the will of God.

You're living out of the will of God. Oh, I'm not, don't say I'm out of the will of God. I'm doing exactly, let's say I'm a pastor here and I'm in the will of God.

No, you're in the will of God as a pastor. You're out of the will of God because you're not full of thanksgiving. You're not overflowing with thanksgiving.

You don't give God thanks and everything. How many of us are out of the will of God and we don't even know it? We walk around grumpy and with the society we live in, it feeds this victimization process. No one

knows the trouble I've seen.

You don't know how I was treated growing up. Hey, listen, my dad was an alcoholic for 22 years. I grew up in hell on wheels.

I saw my mother beat. My dad lost his job, never made it to my wedding. So if I want to dwell on all of that, you know, I can have a pity party with you.

But why should I dwell on that? Christ died for me. My sins are forgiven. I'm going to heaven when I die.

Come on, do I get an amen here? So to give God thanks in times of struggle is so key and very few of us know it because we relate. Answer to prayer, give thanksgiving. No, in everything give him thanks.

Built up in the faith, overflowing with thanksgiving. Built up in the faith, overflowing with thanksgiving. A lot of times in life, as I get ready to close here, a lot of times in life, you go through times where your heart is broken.

A lot of times, life has worked out and you don't understand what's happening. Anybody ever have one of those moments? You pray and it doesn't get better right away. In fact, you pray and it gets worse.

And Satan says, keep praying and the whole thing's going to blow up. Anybody ever have one of those? How many have ever prayed for something instead of it getting better? It gets worse, come on. Come on, we're being honest now.

Ah, that's the moment to give thanksgiving so you can strengthen your faith. That's the time to remember what God has done in the past. You know, one time I was attacked in the early days in the ministry as a pastor.

Things were very discouraging. This church that my wife and I were at was just, it was so negative, so problematic. No people, no money, rundown building, no anything, just.

It was so depressing, I didn't want to go to church on Sunday and I was the pastor, I mean, that's not good. That's not a good sign. I remember those days, dreading the trip down Foppish Avenue to the church, dreading it, dreading it.

So, one Saturday night, I was ready to bail and just, I said, I can't go in the next day. I can't do this. I was up in the attic in the house I lived in there in New Jersey.

And I was up in the attic hoping to pray. I couldn't pray. Sounded like, felt like somebody was choking me.

So I said, you know what I got to do? I got to remember the goodness of God and what he's done in the past. And as God is my holy witness, I couldn't. I don't know what happened, some attack in my mind.

I couldn't think of one blessing. You ever have a moment like that? Satan will just attack you and show the picture so dark, so bleak. And then, when I couldn't think of anything to grab ahold of, I remember my heart starting to beat fast and hot tears coming out of my eyes because I realized there's a fight going on for my soul.

And oh, I latched on to something God had done. When he healed my daughter of an eye ailment. When he put my wife and I together and some things that were, happened at our wedding reception.

Oh, and I started to praise God. I started to thank him. I got up off the mattress where I was sitting on in this old ratty attic.

And I started walking around with the beams low over my head. And I said, Noah, thank you, God. I thank you, God.

I thank you, God. I know you've been good to me. You are faithful, God.

I thank you. I praise you. And as I began to thank God and praise him, suddenly light started to shine into my soul.

My faith began to grow. I made it to church that next day. I don't know what would happen if I didn't fight through and just praise God.

Feel like praising God? That was the last thing in the world I felt like doing. I felt like quitting. I felt like quitting.

Praise God. Thank God. I felt like quitting.

So this is why Paul says, strengthened in the faith, overflowing with thanksgiving. Because thanksgiving makes you look up. See, when you thank God, you automatically look up to Christ.

You remember his faithfulness. You think about his goodness. Thanksgiving automatically makes you look up.

And that's the power of thanksgiving in many ways. It's not the words, thank you, Jesus, gracias, senor, por todo, senor. It's looking up.

It's looking up. That's where I should be looking. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith.

Because when you're discouraged, where are you looking? Not up, you're looking here, or worse, you're looking down. That would change somebody's life here today if you just began to praise and thank God. Nobody can grow spiritually without a thankful spirit.

This is why so many Christians are stuck in neutral. They can't get in drive. Because they're just not thankful.

They're not thankful. You say, well, that's not that important. Do you realize that thanksgiving is the tipping point that ruined the universe? Humanity, do you realize that? When Paul in Romans begins to review the mess that the world has become, to set the stage for God's love and sending Christ, but he wants to show how perverted the world is.

And we live in one of the most perverted cities on the whole face of this earth. What's going on in the schools, what's going on with our children, I don't even want to go there because I'll lose what little sanctification I have. I just get upset.

How many just get flat upset when you see what people do? Glorifying sin, glorifying everything. But just don't say anything about Jesus or they'll jump down your throat. What a sick leader, sick government, sick country this is.

But you know how it all began? Listen how it all began. Paul says, here's how the world got in trouble. Look, for although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor what? They wouldn't give thanks.

But their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. That's what tipped it. And then the verses that follow is God said, oh, you're going to be that way? I give you over to your own darkness.

I give you over to your own unnatural lust. I give you over to it all. Why? Because you knew me and you wouldn't thank me.

A lot of people in this world who come to church, why they're in reverse is they're not thankful. All they can talk about is their problems. All they can do is complain.

Negativity, complaining about their life, other people, gossip, slander. That's all they're thinking about. But Thanksgiving, you won't hear one peep.

They can't thank God. And then this cloud comes over their lives. You want to know a cure for depression? Start thanking God.

You want a cure for negativity? Start thanking God. But Pastor Simba, as I close, Pastor Simba don't, I don't feel like it. Listen, I said before, Thanksgiving has nothing to do with feelings.

Do you want to thank Him? You can start to thank Him. You don't want to thank Him? Then you won't thank Him. When somebody gives me a Christmas present, I have a choice.

Thank Him or not thank Him. If I don't thank Him, it's because I didn't want to thank Him. And just think why it's so quiet here.

It's because some of you, I can sense, are under conviction by the Holy Spirit because you complain and you talk and you moan and groan about life. And God has done so much for you. That's why the Bible says it can't be something we do naturally because the Bible says in everything give thanks.

Now that's a choice because sometimes, do you wake up in the morning sometimes and not feel like giving thanks? Come on, I'm going to lift my hand. Anybody here ever wake up in the morning and you feel like just, like, eugh. Or the bottom falls out or somebody hurts you, you feel like giving thanks? And yet God gives us this word through the Apostle Paul, 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Look at that verse.

Give thanks in how many circumstances? Wait a minute, wait a minute. I just got a pink slip. I just got laid off from my job.

Should I give thanks? No, come on. Are you kidding me? For real? You mean in all circumstances? In every situation, give thanks why? For this is God's will. It's not God's will because he's like saying, you better give thanks, you better, it's no, give thanks and I'll pour more into your life.

Just think of all the new things God wants to do in some of our lives. He cannot do it because we're so stinking unthankful. Why would God give new gifts to people who aren't even thanking him for what he's already done? Come on, do I get a witness here? In other words, God's been so good to you, done so much for you, helped you in so many times.

Altos, has he helped you in the past? Not at me, has he helped you in the past? But you're so negative, maybe one of you, that he wants to do new things. How can he do it? You're not even thanking him for

what he did in the past. And you out there and across the street, in the overflow areas, if you're unthankful, you're cutting yourself off from the new blessings that God has for you.

That's why God says this is the will of God for you. I want you to be thankful because as the Thanksgiving go up, the new blessings come in. Then the Thanksgiving goes up.

Come on, let's put our hands together. Then the new blessings come down. Oh, Pastor Cimbala, that's just a lot.

We give you praise, yeah. You know what, Pastor Cimbala, that's a lot of emotional stuff and all of that. You know what, according to your faith, so be it unto you.

Not going to argue with a soul here. Why should I argue with you? You want to be grumpy the rest of your life and negative? Put on a smile in front of people and then be depressed the rest of your life, even though God's been so good to you? Look at me, everyone who's a Christian. Well, first of all, if you're not a believer here today, you ought to be thankful you're still alive because today is the day of salvation and you can make Christ your Savior today.

So be thankful for that. But I want to talk to you believers. God's forgiven you all your sin.

You're not thankful about that? Wait a minute, everything filthy thing you and I have ever done or said has been forgiven and washed away and you and I are not happy? Wait a minute, if they drop a bomb on this building before it closed, before the day is out and we're all killed, we go immediately to heaven to be with Jesus forever and ever? How many believe that? Say amen. He's forgiven you all your sins. He brought you into his family, not because of anything you did, just out of his mercy.

And if we die, we're going to be with him forever? And wait a minute, he promised I will never leave you nor forsake you? No matter what you do, I will hang in there with you? When your best friend leaves you, I'll be the friend that sticks closer than a brother? And we're not thankful? And we're going to complain? Looking back on my life, last word, looking back on my life, all I can see is mercy and grace. I don't know about you, how about you? That's all I see. All I see is God overseeing my faults, my weakness, showing mercy, forgiving, giving me grace and helping me through things I thought I couldn't get through.

And if you're here, ever thought you wouldn't make it, you couldn't get through another day, but God brought you through another day, just lift your hand if you had a day like that. Just want to quit, blow up, give up, run away. And we're here.

We're alive. Hey, are we alive? We're here today. We can praise him.

Okay. Lift that keyboard up. We're going to sing a song here to close.

It's simple, it just says, we give you praise. And I want to challenge people in this room. I don't care if you're a visiting pastor, I don't care who you are.

If God's convicted you, wow. One of the reasons I'm not being strengthened in faith is I am not overflowing with thanksgiving. I am not.

But God, I decide today to be overflowing with thanksgiving. Teach me to be more thankful. But I don't care if my heart is broken and tears are coming from my eyes.

Satan, I resist you in the name of Jesus Christ. I will lift my hands and I will sing. I will sing.

But Pastor Simba, I don't feel it. Sing anyway. God didn't ask you to feel it.

He said, sing it. He said, give it. Sacrifice means you do it.

Then let him take care of the feelings. Every eye close. Anybody here just down in the dumps? Depressed, under the attack like I was that day? Imagine, ready to quit the ministry.

Ready to not even go to church on a Sunday. And I was the shepherd. Forsaking the sheep.

All because of discouragements. Damnably negative things that the devil brings into our lives. Just down.

discouraged, distractions, feeling inadequate, feeling insufficient, just all that chunk. And what he wants to block us from is just thinking and thanking. Thinking about God's goodness.

If he began a good work in you, will he not complete it? Does the Lord begin something and then quit on it? If he called you in the ministry, is he gonna now just drop you like a hotcake? Never. Never. Nunca.

Impossible. No, he's gonna help you. But you'll never know what he can do until you start praising God, start thanking God, get out of the doldrums.

I'm gonna call you forward and we're gonna start to sing. If I see one of you looking down, I'm gonna come in with my own two hands, make your head go up. Because we're gonna look up and thank him.

No matter how bad it is, here's my last word. It could be worse. Thank him that it's not worse than what it is.

Come on, thank him for what it is, that it's not worse. Okay, every eye closed. Anybody want to come up here and say, pastor, I want you to pray over me and I want to just lead the way in thanking him today.

And that includes the people behind me dressed in black there. You come up to this altar. Anybody want to come? You just come up and say, pastor, that word was for me today.

That word was for me. I humble myself and I admit that word was for me. I'm not overflowing with Thanksgiving.

I'm overflowing with complaining. I'm overflowing with negativity sometimes. I'm overflowing with a lot of stuff.

But pastor, God's been good to me. You've reminded me how he's helped me. And I want to start giving him thanks.

Everybody open your mouth and give God praise for 30 seconds. Come on, everybody. We give you thanks for your mercy, for your faithfulness, for all the times you've seen us through.

Every valley, Lord. Over every mountain, Lord. We praise you.

We thank you. We appreciate you. We're a blessed people.

We have a heavenly father. I belong to the family of God. My sins are forgiven.

The blood has washed away everything I've done. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Just open your mouth and give him a hallelujah or a praise, God. It's important. We give you praise.

We give you hallelujah. The fruit of our lips. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

Father God, we know that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. But as we read your word and as we meditate on your promises, stir up a spirit of thanksgiving in us and help us to remember how important it is to be overflowing with thanksgiving. The same God who said, search the scriptures is the same God who says, in everything, give thanks.

Don't let us be ungrateful. Don't let us be selfish. And Lord, the spirit of the age is victimization.

Everyone is feeling sorry for themselves and for us to shine for you. We have to have a different spirit, Lord. While everyone is groaning and complaining, put a song in our heart so that people say, what in the world are you so happy and thankful about? And then we can tell them about the Father that we have in heaven, the Savior that we have in our heart through the Holy Spirit.

I thank you today, God, that you're with us and that we're gonna praise you all day long. And when we start to get negative, Holy Spirit, come and remind us to just start saying, thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus.

Thank you, God. Thank you for your blessings. We ask this all, Father, in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, and everyone said, Amen.

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