

Giving Thanks
1 Thessalonians 5:18

Introduction.

- A. Customary to think of things for which we are thankful.
 - B. Today, I want us to think more of what it means to be thankful.
 - C. Numerous Bible passages exhort us to give thanks.
 - 1. 1 Chron. 16:8. 2. Ps. 7:17. 3. Ps. 28:7. 4. Ps. 30:11-12.
 - 5. Ps. 35:18. 6. Ps. 75:1. 7. Ps. 100:4. 8. Ps. 107:1.
 - 9. 1 Cor. 15:57. 10. 2 Cor. 2:14. 11. 2 Cor. 9:15.
- (People from the class reading the passages.)

I. The problem of pain. (C.S. Lewis; *The Problem of Pain*.)

- A. How can I be thankful when suffering (1 Thess. 5:18)?
(Lewis again.)
- B. Suffering is a universal experience.
 - 1. All the monotheistic religions were preached and practiced long before the invention of pain killers.
 - 2. Yet all have insisted that God is good.
- C. Are we supposed to thank God for all the evil that befalls us?
 - 1. But no one suffers all the pain of the universe.
 - 2. We suffer only our own pain.
- D. For many, Thanksgiving is a time of bitterness, not of thanksgiving.

II. Give thanks in all circumstances.

- A. God didn't create evil and suffering.
 - 1. It resulted from sin.
 - 2. In the end, everything will be put right.
- B. The fact of suffering doesn't change the goodness of God.
(Philip Yancey quote from *Where is God When it Hurts?*: That life is difficult has nothing to do with whether God is good.)
- C. We are not told to thank God FOR suffering but be thankful IN it.
(Paul in prison, Phil. 1:15-26)
 - 1. Most virtues come about through suffering (Gal. 5:22f.).
 - 2. The ripple effect (Acts 16:22ff.; Gen. 50:20).
 - 3. God's megaphone (Lewis again.)

III. The greatest gift.

- A. Salvation.
- B. All suffering pales compared to eternal life (2 Cor. 4:17; Ro. 8:18).