

## SERMON TRANSCRIPT

<b>SERMON TITLE:</b>	What to Do When You Don't Feel Thankful
<b>SERMON REFERENCE:</b>	Ephesians 5:20
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Be finding please Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20. And in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20 there is a command, which many believe, and I think I do also, may be the hardest command in all of the Bible to obey. But correspondingly and at the same time, this command may bring the greatest blessing of all when it is obeyed. Let's look at it. Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20, "*Giving thanks always for all things,*" now, just underscore the 'all things,' "*unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Again, I say that may be the hardest commandment of all in the Bible to obey.

There are four levels of life when it comes to Thanksgiving. First of all, there are those people who are constantly complaining. Have you ever been around those people? They're just always complaining. They can't find good in anything.

One woman was married to a man like that. He never could be pleased. One morning she got out of the bed determined to please him. She said, "Sweetheart, what would you like for breakfast? I'll fix it any way that you would like and any thing that you'd like." He said, "All right," said, "I want two pieces of toast. I want one whole wheat and I want one white bread. I want the whole wheat bread lightly buttered, nothing on the white bread, and I want two eggs. I want one fried over easy and I want the other scrambled. You got it?" She said, "Got it, sweetheart." And she fixed him breakfast just like that. And he still had a sour look on his face. She said, "Darling, what's wrong?" He said, "You scrambled the wrong egg." There are people like that. You can't please them. They're constantly complaining.

Then, a little higher than that are people who have simple ingratitude. They don't complain; they just are not grateful. And they're like a hog under a tree eating acorns, never looking up to see where they come from. And many of us, though we may not be bitterly complaining, we are ungrateful.

But then there is another level of life, and these are people who are grateful for the obvious blessings. If they have health, they thank God for health. If they have food, they thank God for food and they just thank God for the obvious blessings of life.

But the highest level, the Bible level, the level of this verse that I have is not the level of constantly complaining or mere ingratitude or thankful for obvious blessings, but look at it, "*Giving thanks always for all things.*" Now, that, friend, is the highest level of life and that is the level that will get you through life.

There is a legend of a man who found the devil's seed barn, where the devil kept his seeds that he would sow in the hearts and lives of human beings. And he found there was a super abundance of one kind of seed. And it was the seed of

discouragement. And the devil said, when he was plied about why he had so many of the seeds of discouragement, he said, "Well, if I can get discouragement into a person's life, then I can get almost anything else I want into their life." And he said, "I found that the seeds of discouragement will sprout almost anywhere except in the heart of a grateful person." *"Giving thanks always for all things in the name, unto the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Now, let's break it down and look at it this morning, shall we? Okay.

First of all, I want you to notice the duration of this kind of thanks, **the duration of thanksgiving**. He says here that we're to be, *"Giving thanks always,"* always. Why always? Blessings never cease! Therefore, thanksgiving should never cease. Ephesians 5 verse 20, *"Giving thanks always."* Now, we're to praise God always; therefore, folks, one day of thanksgiving on Thursday in November is not enough. We've got to give 365 days of thanksgiving. Let's me give you a Scripture, Psalm chapter 68 verse 19, *"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation."* And then He says, *"Selah."* That means "think about that; meditate upon that." God daily loads us with blessings. God has given you today a wagonload of blessings. And then, Lamentations chapter 3 verse 23, speaking of God's mercies, the Bible says, *"They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness, great is Thy faithfulness."* God has been faithful to you, precious friend, and He has been faithful with a great faithfulness. And so, every day ought to have a liberal portion of thanksgiving.

And every prayer ought to be mixed with thanksgiving. Put this verse in, Philippians chapter 4 and verse 6, *"Be careful for nothing,"* that is, don't worry about anything, *"but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."* Now, look up here and I want to tell you something. *"Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."* If you ask God for more blessings and don't thank God for what He's already done for you, you are wicked and foolish. If you come to God and you say, "God, do this and do that, give this or give that," and you don't thank God, you are wicked and foolish. *"Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."* Now, most of us need to pull some of the groans out of our prayers and shove in a few hallelujahs. Thanks is a wonderful thing.

Rudyard Kipling, the great poet of yesteryear, gained quite a bit of notoriety as a writer and as a matter of fact, he was being paid ten shillings per word at the height of his career. That was a lot of money back in those days, ten shillings a word. There were some college students who were also into writing and journalism, and they were a little jealous of Rudyard Kipling. And so, they thought they'd play a little joke on him. Ten shillings a word was preposterous to them. They gathered up ten shillings and put it in an envelope and mailed it to Rudyard Kipling and said,

“Here are ten shillings. Give us your best word.” He wrote back, “Thanks!” That’s a good word! Learning to thank God.

Now, what is the duration of thanksgiving? Giving thanks always, always, always, perpetually thanking God. Why? Thanks should never cease because blessings never cease.

Now, here’s the second thing I want to lay on your heart. Not only the duration of this thanksgiving, but we’re going to slow down here for a moment and think about **the dimensions of this thanksgiving**, the dimensions of thanksgiving. We’re to be giving thanks for all things. Now, giving thanks always would not be difficult if he had not put in here, “*Giving thanks always for all things.*” Now, why should we give thanks for all things? Because simply, God rules all things and we should give thanks for all things. Now, go back and look in Ephesians 5 verse 19 and 20. We’re to be, “*Speaking to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Thankfulness comes before praise. No matter what happens, listen, no matter what happens, according to Ephesians chapter 5 verses 19 and 20; you are to have a song in your heart.

Now, we need to thank God for the very rudimentary things, the simple things of life. Thank God, for example, for water. Now, you go to a fountain and drink fresh, sparkling water. You turn the tap on in your home and thank God for water. Have you thanked God for the water that you have? Thank God for just simple things like water.

Thank God for simple things like dirty dishes. You say, “Now, wait a minute, I don’t thank God for dirty dishes.” You ought to, because it means you just had a meal. There are a number of people who would be grateful to thank God for some dirty dishes in this world because they wouldn’t have enjoyed the meal that you have enjoyed, or that kind of a meal.

It’s the simple things we can thank God for and the obvious things, but what about the sorrowful things? What about when we don’t feel thankful? What about when we hurt? What about when there are problems that God alone knows how deep they are? Can you thank Him for heartache? Can you thank Him for sorrow? “Well,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, if you knew what I’m going through, you wouldn’t be preaching with such a happy face this morning.” Well, let me tell you something. I’m not the one who wrote this Scripture. It’s written by divine inspiration. I’m not the author of it; I’m just the Western Union boy or the newsboy delivering the

message. This was written by the apostle Paul. Well, you say, “He never had any problems.” Ha, ha, friend, he wrote this from prison! He is in Ephesus in prison. He’s been unjustly accused of starting a riot. And now he is languishing in prison. And he is saying, “Give thanks to God for all things.” Now, why is this?

Well, let me talk to you a little bit about the overruling hand of God. I said giving thanks, the dimensions are always for all things, because of the overruling providence of God. Let’s go down through some of the things that trouble and heartache and problems and sickness and death and tears may do for us.

Number one, when we have trouble, **it may correct us**. There is a correcting ministry. Put down Hebrews chapter 12 verse 11, “*Now no chastening for the present time seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; but afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.*” Did your father ever chastise you and take a whip or a belt to you? Now, today, you know, they think you ought not to do that. My dad would have been put in the innermost prison. But he would say, as our fathers did, “Son, I do this because I love you.” Now, I was convinced he loved me. As a matter of fact, he convinced me I was his favorite. He loved me more than he loved my brother. “*No chastening for the present time seemeth to be joyful, but grievous; but afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.*” David said in Psalm 119 verse 67, “*Before I was afflicted, I went astray.*” Now, if suffering and pain sometimes corrects us, then thank God for it.

Now, not only may it correct us, but **it may cause us to have a greater dependency upon God**. You know, if we don’t have difficulty, many times we do not depend. If we didn’t have troubles we would stray away from Him. But we are crowded by our troubles to Christ.”

The classic passage that we often use is Second Corinthians chapter 12 verses 7 through 10. Paul had a great vision. He was caught up into the third Heaven and saw sacred secrets, things not lawful for a man to utter. He had a great revelation. And he says here in Second Corinthians chapter 12 verses 7 through 10, “*And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*” Three extended periods of prayer. Paul prayed, “God, please take away this excruciating thorn in the flesh from me.” “*And He said unto me, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’*” That is, God said, “I’m not going to take it away. I’m going to give you added strength.” And then, Paul said, “*Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I*

*am strong.*” Paul is saying, “God, in His love to me, gave me a thorn in the flesh that I might see my weakness, depend upon Him, and learn His strength.” Paul didn’t say what can’t be cured must be endured. Paul said, “What cannot be cured will be enlisted and enjoyed, and I will gladly rejoice in my infirmity.” *“Giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Father.”* Now, friend, sometimes this suffering causes us to have a greater dependence upon God. I’ve seen it happen many times.

I’ll tell you what else, friend, it will do. Besides giving you a deepening dependency upon God, **it may confirm your testimony to other people**, when you go through suffering. You see, when we endure and keep praising, we shut the devil’s mouth. You know, there are some people who say, “Well, the only reason that Adrian serves God is because he’s never known any trouble. The only reason this person or that person serves God, they’ve never known any difficulty.” Well, friend, listen. When you go through suffering and pain and heartache and come out on the other side still praising God, it shuts the devil’s mouth. Over there in Philippians chapter 1 and verse 12. Paul is in another prison. When he went to a town, by the way, he never asked, “What kind of hotels you have there?” He said, “What kind of prisons you have there?” He figured that’s where he’d end up. And here’s what he said in Philippians 1 verse 12, *“But I would that ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel.”* “Yes, I have suffered, but it, it caused the Gospel to go further.” And then he says in Philippians 1 verse 29, *“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him but also to suffer for His sake.”* “To suffer for His sake.”

When we can go through heartache, tears, fears, disappointments and problems and still serve God, friend, it shuts the devil’s mouth and it confirms our testimony in the Lord. Now, Paul, who wrote this, before he had written this, had already endured almost every conceivable hardship and human affliction. He suffered shipwrecks. He suffered beatings. He suffered mocking, persecution, hunger, thirst, nakedness, and character assassination. And God used all of this as a platform for Paul to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I’ll tell you something else that suffering will do: **it will bring you to a deeper maturity and more Christ-likeness.** Affliction can be a wonderful teacher. Psalm 119 verse 67, the psalmist said, *“Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Thy word. Before I was afflicted I went astray.”* Psalm 119 verse 71, *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes.”* Many times we never really look up till we get on our back. Many times we never see until our eyes have been washed with tears. You see, God’s priority for you is not health and wealth. God’s priority for you is not primarily service and usefulness. God’s priority for you is spiritual maturity to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s the reason the Bible says in James chapter 1 verse 4, *“Let patience have her perfect work, that ye*

*may be perfect, entire, wanting nothing.*” And the word perfect means maturity. It doesn't mean sinlessness. We look at flowers. We say, “That's a perfect rose, or a perfect daisy.” We don't mean it's sinless; we mean it's mature, it's full bloom. God is aiming at maturity; that's His purpose, that you be mature. That's the perfection He's talking about. And he says how is He going to do this? Through patience.

As I've explained to you many times, patience doesn't mean the ability to build a model ship or to thread a needle. The word patience means endurance. It means bearing up under suffering and problems. And when you endure, you become perfected. You become mature. Now, if you want to be mature, you've got to endure. And if you want to endure, you've got to have something to endure. So God gives us, God allows us to have these things that we might learn endurance. God is bringing you to maturity. And if pain and suffering brings you to maturity, then you can thank God for it.

I'll tell you what else it will do; **it will bring the excelling glory of God in your life.** Listen to First Peter chapter 4 verses 12 through 14, “*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.*” Many of us say, “Oh, this is so strange. Why is this happening to me?” Peter said, “*Don't think it's strange, as though some strange thing happened unto you, But rejoice,*” that means be thankful, “*inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings.*” The word partaker means you're having fellowship with Christ, “*That, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; in their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified.*”

Brothers and sisters, as we get closer to the end time and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can expect increasing persecution. If you can't see it happening you are blind and deaf. More and more Christians are going to be persecuted. And the more you give God the thanks for this persecution, the more the glory of God is going to rest upon you.

Some years ago we were in a battle in our denomination. Some of us believed that our denomination was moving away from her foundations, her root in the Word of God. We decided to do something about it. Well, when we did, the sluice gates of hell opened on us, and all kinds of things were said. And I had people say things about me that were obviously untrue, unkind. And what I learned to do when somebody would say something like that because of the stand that I would take for the Word of God, I would take that thing and offer it to the Lord. It would be a praise offering. I would say, “Now, Lord, because of the position I've taken and the stand I've taken, I'm receiving this. I am receiving it because of my friendship with You, Jesus. You're the one that got me into this trouble. And so, Lord, here! I give

that to You as a praise.” The worse the criticism, the sweeter the praise. I almost felt like saying, “Thank you for that. You’ve given me something else to worship God with.”

You see, listen, when Stephen was being stoned, in Acts 6:15 the Bible says, “His face shone like the face of an angel.” Over in Daniel chapter 3, when the three Hebrew children were in the fiery furnace, the Bible says in verse 25, “There was a fourth one in there, and His form was like the Son of God.”

God will never be more real, more near, more dear to you than when you are thanking Him. It may bring excelling glory in your life. Listen to First Peter 4:14, “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.”

Now, these are some of the reasons that we ought to give God thanks not only always, but for all things.

Well, you say, “Pastor Rogers, you didn’t explain mine.” Well, friend, I don’t have to explain it. We don’t live by explanations; we live by promises and commandments. And the Bible says, “Giving thanks always for all things.” God is God. He is a sovereign God. And you can arch the rainbow of Romans 8:28 over whatever it is, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to His purpose.” And His purpose is to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ. And sometimes when we’re in trouble we say, “God! Why don’t You do something?” He may be doing something: making you like Jesus. And you say, “Why aren’t You doing something?” And He says, “I’m doing something. You just can’t see. You don’t understand what I am doing.”

Now, we have talked, friend, about the duration of thanksgiving: giving thanks always. We have talked about the dimensions of thanksgiving: giving thanks for all things. Now, let’s just think for just a few moments about **the dynamic of thanksgiving: how do we do it?** Look again at this verse in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20, “Giving thanks always for all things,” now, here’s the dynamic, “unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” That’s the dynamism there. You see, true thanks should be given to the Father through Jesus. That’s what true thanksgiving is about.

Now, first of all, we give thanks unto the Father. Why do we give thanks unto the Father? Well, James chapter 1 verse 17 tells us clearly, “Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh from above, cometh down from the Father of lights, in whom there’s no variableness, nor shadow of turning.” God daily loads us with benefits. Now, God is good. God is good. Now, you say, “Pastor Rogers, are you trying to tell

me that I'm to give thanks for rape, for murder? That I'm to give thanks for disease and some greedy malady that's gnawing away at my body? Am I to give God thanks for that?" No, no, no. "Are you telling me, Pastor, that these things are good?" No, you missed the point. I'm not telling you these things are good. These things are bad. I'm telling you that God is good. God is good. And where God does not rule, God overrules. And God with the chemistry of the cross takes all things and He works them together for good to those who love Him. Therefore, we ought to be thankful to God. Unthankfulness is so sinful. It was Shakespeare who said, "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child."

The Bible over in Romans chapter 1, when it speaks of paganism, gives one of the marks of paganism as unthankfulness. Romans chapter 1 verse 21, "*Because, that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*" Friend, if you fail to thank God, you're going into deep, deep darkness.

Now, we give thanks unto the Father. And we give thanks through the Son. Look again in Ephesians 5 verse 20, "*Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of the, our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Actually, this word, 'in the name' literally means through the name. That is, He is the dynamic. It is Jesus. And through Jesus that I give thanks. In my estimation, you cannot truly, in the New Testament way, the Bible way, give thanks to God unless you do it through Jesus. He is the dynamic. He is the power of it. If you ever doubt the love of God, look at the cross. See who Jesus Christ is. His name actually stands for authority. In the authority of Jesus. Through the name of Jesus, Father, I give You thanks.

Pastor Rittenhouse and his family were on vacation. They were riding along in their automobile. They were going in one direction. A car was going in the other direction and it had a trunk on top. And the trunk fell off into the road. Pastor Rittenhouse stopped his car, went over, and picked up the trunk and turned around to try to find the other car, but it was too late. So they opened the trunk, it was already somewhat broken, and went through it to try to find an address. They couldn't find any address, but they found a gold medal. And this gold medal, this gold piece, was inscribed, and here's what it said, "Given to Otis, O-T-I-S, Given to Otis Simpson at his retirement by the Portland Cement Company." Otis Simpson, Portland Cement. So they began to do some investigatory work. And they traced it down, and they found Otis Simpson's address. And they wrote him and told him, "We have your suitcase. We found it. We want to return it to you." And he wrote them back and said, "I don't want the suitcase. What was in it was trivial. I want the gold piece. Would you please return it to me." And here's what he said several times in the letter, "That is my most precious possession." A twenty-dollar gold piece given to Otis Simpson upon his retirement from Portland Cement Company. They sent it back to him, but Pastor Rittenhouse wrote him a letter. Said, "Dear Mr.

Simpson, I'm sending you this, but you mentioned that it was your most precious possession. May I be bold enough to tell you my most precious possession?" And he shared with Otis his relationship with Jesus Christ and explained to this man how he could know Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. One year later, on the anniversary of that day, Pastor Rittenhouse got a letter from Otis Simpson, and in it was a twenty-dollar gold piece, the same one. He said, "I'm giving you this back to keep because," he said, "no longer is it my most precious possession." He said, "Now we're active members of a Bible-preaching church, and I want you to know, sir, that Jesus Christ is my most precious possession." Isn't that wonderful?

Friend, listen. If you have Jesus, if you have the Lord Jesus Christ, you can say this Thanksgiving season, "*Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.*" What is the duration of thanksgiving? To give thanks always. What are the dimensions of thanksgiving? All things. What is the dynamic of thanksgiving? Through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know Him?

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And if you're certain that you're saved, I want you to begin to pray for those you know who may not know Jesus. And if you're certain that you're saved, thank Him that you know that you're saved. Thank Him that Jesus is your most precious possession, because if you're saved, I can tell you He is.

And those of you who are not saved, or those of you who don't have a personal relationship with God through Christ, this is a wonderful moment for you. And my precious friend, may I guide you in a decision time, right now, where you are, you can say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ, yield your life to Him, and invite Him to take control of your life. I invite you to pray a prayer like this, "Dear God, I know that You love me and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus. This morning, with all of my heart like a little child, I receive You into my life as my Lord and Savior and Master. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. And now take control of my life and begin to make me the person You want me to be. I just yield my life over to You right now. I'm weak, but You're strong. So begin now, Lord, from this moment on as my Lord and Savior. Thank You for saving me. Thank You for Your shed blood on the cross. Thank You that You paid my sin debt with Your blood. Thank You that You were raised from the dead. Thank You, Jesus. In Your name I pray. Amen."