

Choose Gratitude

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[0 : 00] Father, your son has told us that there's many different ways that your word can come to us, that some of us people, we can be like shallow ground.

Some can be ground with lots of weeds and thorns. And some of us, Father, can be good soil. Some of us can be so hard that your word makes no impression whatsoever. Father, you know our hearts and you know our minds and you know our wills.

And we ask, Father, that knowing us as you do and knowing that you still love us, Father, in your mercy and in your kindness, would you so pour out your Holy Spirit upon us this morning that we will be good soil, that your word will enter deep within our lives, deep within our minds and hearts and wills, and that as your word comes into us, that it will bear much fruit for your glory.

This we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Please be seated. Just as a bit of an aside, this Sunday in the blog, which is in your bulletin, I talk a little bit about the Catholic Church and what the Creed means, and over the next few weeks, different parts of the Creed in particular.

I'm going to talk about the Church again next week, and then I'm going to talk about what it means by remission of sins and all that. But if you have any questions, just send me an email, and over the next few weeks as I write my weekly blog, I'll try to answer your questions.

[1 : 28] Please take your Bible and turn in your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, and we're sort of in the middle of a teaching series on practical discipleship.

And so we're taking a series of different commands in the Bible that are practical, and we're looking at one each week. And so it's 1 Thessalonians 5 verses 9, and we're going to read down to verse 18, because verse 18 is the text that I'm going to speak on.

We're going to look at together this morning. And 1 Thessalonians 5, if you've forgotten your Bibles, there's always some Bibles up here at the front, and you're welcome to have them. Here's how the text goes.

For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we might live with him.

Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. We ask you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

[2 : 38] Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers and sisters, admonish the disorderly, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all, see that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. And the text we're going to examine together today is, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

On Thursday, I went to my daughter Emma's high school graduation ceremony. If you're a guest here, I have nine kids. Emma's my eighth child, so it was my eighth high school graduation ceremony.

And, you know, it's astounding. I don't know if, like, like, my oldest son, my oldest child, I don't know, like, if he just is, like, really inferior to Emma and her class, but every single time we go to a high school graduation, they always tell them that you are the kindest, smartest, most gifted, you know, on and on and on class.

That, I mean, the principal, the presenters, they always say that every year. So I don't know if that means that, like, my son was up here, and they just, every generation just keeps getting better. And I don't know, before long, they'll all be like, I don't know, like, my grandkids will be like gods and goddesses.

[4 : 08] I don't know what's going on. But every, every year, they're always told the same thing. I, I said the same thing at the eight o'clock service, and a man who was going out of the service said, you know what, I went to my daughter's high school graduation, and it's not yours.

And they told my daughter that her class was the best, and brightest, and smartest. So I don't, you know, he didn't know what was going on. Now, I'm not going to make fun of high school graduations, and it's definitely better that they say nice things like that than mean things.

True story. When I was in my rural parish, there was a neighboring church, a few kilometers away, and the minister had been away on holidays, and he'd been away for, like, for quite a few weeks, all on the same, he went to one cottage, and he went to the same church the whole time.

And when he came back on, the first Sunday he came back in his sermon, he said, gosh, you guys are such a lousy congregation. Like, where I was before, they give more money, they work harder, they keep the church nicer, they love Jesus more, they come to the prayer meetings, and he went on and on and on, and the sermon ended, and the whole congregation, I'm not making this up, the whole congregation got up and walked out.

Didn't come back. So, you know, it's much better at high school graduations that they say nice things than bad things. Okay? I mean, they shouldn't really say, the principal shouldn't say, I've been a principal for 25 years, you're the worst class that I've ever, I've had more problems, headaches, sleepless nights with you than anybody else.

[5 : 34] He shouldn't say that, even if it was true. However, here's the thing, at a high school graduation ceremony, they'll always as well say all these things like, reach the stars, you know, whatever you can do, do it with all your might, you know, and, you know, be thankful, be kind.

In fact, actually, if you put up the Bible verse, you put up the Bible verse, Andrew, other than this little bit, just say it with me, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

In fact, often in ceremonies like that, they'll actually say something like, give thanks in all circumstances, because it'll make you happier, wiser, more successful, more fit, better looking, shinier teeth, I mean, they don't say all those things, but you know what I mean.

And they'll often say things like that, and often in churches and stuff, when they have a sermon about giving thanks, it often ends up sounding a little bit like it's a high school graduation ceremony, that, you know, just give thanks, give thanks, give thanks, give thanks, give thanks, but here's the problem with that.

The problem is Jesus. Jesus throws a monkey wrench into all of this talk about give thanks, and give thanks, and giving thanks is good for you, and giving thanks will make you more successful.

[6 : 53] Here's the problem. Jesus throws a huge monkey wrench into that whole way of interpreting give thanks in all circumstances. You don't believe me? Turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 18.

Luke chapter 18. And we're going to look at verse 10 and following and see what Jesus says here. Luke chapter 18, beginning at verse 10.

Luke 18, verse 10. And if you don't have your Bible, and if you don't have your Bible, and if you don't have your Bible, you can just listen as I read. Jesus is talking. He says, two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee standing by himself prayed thus, God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector standing far off, notice he's not going to be thankful at all. The tax collector standing far off would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

[8 : 03] And Jesus says, I tell you, this man, the tax collector, went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

So here's the first thing. Andrew, if you could put it up. Sometimes being thankful shows that we are very far from God. Sometimes being thankful shows we are very far from God.

I'm going to have a different number. Like I'm going to have a variety of points up here, but in some ways, this is like the thing I'm going to try to show you a little bit about how to understand that when the Bible text says to give thanks in all circumstances, that we have to try to understand it in a biblical way so we can put it into in practice in a biblical way.

And the first thing is that while being thankful is, good in a right, in a certain context, Jesus shows us and tells us that sometimes being thankful shows we are very far from God.

Put the scripture text up again, Andrew. And by the way, if you want these points, they'll be on the webpage on Monday if you can't write them down quick enough. But say this text with me together. Say it with me.

[9 : 26] Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Now, here's the other problem that we have with this text is, I don't know how many people there are here, a hundred people.

I don't know what the number is. I'll figure it out later. Chances are that some of you are very sad. Some of you are probably depressed. Some of you are probably depressed. Some of you probably feel very empty.

Some of you are struggling with loneliness. Some of you are struggling with financial problems. Some of you are all of the above. And you know, you hear a Bible text like, give thanks in all circumstances.

And you think to yourself, if you think to yourself, I came into the church depressed. Now I feel worse. Because I don't feel thankful at all.

And I don't feel thankful, and it's hard for me. And now the Bible tells me that it's God's will for me to be thankful, and I don't feel thankful at all. And inside, you're saying, George, if you knew the financial problems, if you knew the pain that I was struggling with right now in my body, if you knew the constant pain I had, if God knew that, he wouldn't say that I should be giving thanks in all circumstances.

[10 : 46] I feel completely and utterly unthankful. Well, here's the thing about hearing this Bible text. If the first thing is to try to tell us that it's not, the Bible's not telling us to be like a boosterism, like just, you know, give thanks, give thanks, give thanks, and it's a key to success.

If that's not what the Bible's saying, the Bible's also doing something else, saying something else which is often missed by Christians. If you could put the next point up, Andrew, it's saying this, the Bible is not telling me to feel thankful.

The Bible is not telling me to feel thankful. All you depressed people out there, a little bit of weight should just come off your shoulders.

Okay? The Bible is not telling me to feel thankful. I'm not denying the Bible. I'm just trying to clarify, in fact, what those few simple words are actually telling us.

And they're not telling us to feel anything. The Bible never tells us to feel anything, which is wise, and the Bible is wise, because as we all know, telling somebody to feel something basically never works.

[12 : 00] In fact, if you tell somebody to be more happy, you know what it usually creates? Anger. It doesn't create happiness. In fact, unless they get happy when they're angry, that's the only way they're happy.

You know, they weren't feeling thankful or happy before. Now you told them to be happy, makes them angry. They get happy when they're angry, so they're happy, but that's not what you meant, right? You don't want to have angry people get more angry.

And the Bible's not telling us to feel anything. If you could put the Bible text up again, Andrew, let's say it together. Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

The Bible is not all, it's also not telling us that we have to be thankful for every single thing that happens to us. The Bible is not a piece of Stoic literature.

Those of a certain type of educational background will know what Stoics are. The Bible is not telling us to be Stoics. The Bible does not present a God who's sort of distant and distant, maybe very distant, and now sort of operates basically by fate, and we just have to accept everything that happens.

[13 : 13] We don't have to say to God, okay, God, thank you for my cancer. Thank you that I'm bankrupt. Thank you that I broke my leg. Thank you that, you know, like that country and western song, my wife left me, my dog left me, you know, my truck left me, and everything left me, and thank you for this, God.

The Bible's not telling us that we have to give thanks to God for everything that happens to us. Some really terrible things happen to us, and it's not our fault, and some really bad things happen to us because it's our fault, right?

I mean, for many people, if you have, I mean, I'm not a doctor, maybe it's for every person. If you have cirrhosis of the liver, for many people, it's because you have excessive drinking for a long time, and you can't say, God, thank you so much for my excessive drinking for a long time, and I now have, that's not what the text is saying at all.

Here's, if you put up the point, Andrew, here's what the text is saying. God calls me to turn to him and give him thanks in my circumstances, not for my circumstances.

That's what the Bible text is telling us to do. If we clear away a little bit about what the Bible is not telling us to do, this is part, this is the heart of what the Bible is telling you and me to do.

[14 : 35] God calls me to turn to him and give him thanks in my circumstances, not for my circumstances.

It's a very, very important distinction. Put the text up again, Andrew, please, and say it with, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Here's the other thing. When I was in my previous church, one morning I got a call from a distraught mom and her, no, so it wasn't the mom, it was the wife, and her husband was in jail and she asked me if I would go to visit him in jail.

And it was the first time I ever went to visit somebody in jail. It was the old jail in Pembroke. I don't think it exists anymore. And so I went to see this fellow in jail.

It was a very memorable time, not only because it was the first time I ever went to jail, but it was the other thing that was memorable was that when I walked into a certain part of the jail, not only was my parishioner there, but another parishioner was there.

[15 : 47] And I wish I had a camera to capture the look of surprise on his face when I walked in because he was trying to keep it secret that he was doing time in jail. And anyway, so I go see my parishioner and he had a really hard, terrible time.

It's his own fault. He woke up that morning in the Killaloo Detention Center and he didn't know why he was in the Killaloo Detention Center.

He didn't know what he'd done. But he woke up feeling sick and with a terrible headache. He knew the last thing he could remember was that he was drinking. And then he wakes up and he's in a jail and he asks the guards what he's done and they won't tell him, but they're not very friendly to him. And they drive him to the Pembroke Jail and he asks them time and time again. He doesn't know if he's killed somebody. True story. He doesn't know if he's killed somebody. They drive him to the jail.

They still don't tell him what he's done. It's only when he's being booked into the Pembroke Jail that they tell him what the charges were against him. He'd gotten ragingly drunk, crashed his car, and when the police came to try to deal with him, he was a little short guy like this, little scrawny, short, hardworking, working class guy, and he tried to take on the cops and beat them up.

[17 : 18] And the cops were all like this tall with shoulders like this, but so he got overwhelmingly drunk, smashed up his car, walked away from it, started to fight and kicked and fought the cops as hard as he could until they finally subdued him, put him in the car, passed out, threw up in the car, I mean the whole bit.

You can understand why the cops didn't want to talk to him. But he was very subdued when I met with him. And here's the thing.

If you could put the next point up, Andrew, here's the thing. God calls me to turn to him and speak to him and one of the things I am to do is to give thanks.

I'll explain why the Bible text tells us this. God calls me to turn to him and speak to him and one of the things I am to do is to give thanks, but it's not the only thing I am to do.

You see, that young guy, if he was to listen to give thanks in all circumstances, he has to turn to God, he has to say some things to God, but he shouldn't only say thank you.

[18 : 33] Right? He needs to probably say, dear God, I really messed up, I really did wrong things. Isn't that what he has to say?

I mean, some of us, if we're in a terrible situation, maybe we're in a terrible family situation, and we take this text to heart, we're not to say to God, dear God, thank you so much that nobody in my family will ever talk to me again.

That's not what the Bible is telling us to say. One of the things that we might have to say is, dear God, please forgive me that I am so angry and unforgiving.

Please help me with my unforgiveness. That might be one of the things we have to say. You see, if you put up the text again, Andrew, here's the thing, in the original language, in English, they have to translate English, give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. In the original language, the word the isn't there. It doesn't make any sense in English, so they have to add it in English. And what it means is, if the word the was there, it might mean that literally in these circumstances, that's the thing you have, you always have to be thankful.

[19 : 44] Like, it has to be the substance of your talk, the main thing of your talk. But what this is saying is that what, the text is saying is that you're not giving thanks to God for everything that's happened to you, but whatever your situation is, you turn to God and talk to him and there's going to be maybe a whole range of things that you're going to have to say.

Maybe you're going to have to say, you know, forgive me for this and forgive me for this and help me with this and show me this and give me wisdom about this. But out of all of the things that you say, one of the things that you must say is give thanks.

In light of your situation, but it's not the only thing, but it's one thing, it's an important thing in terms of your relationship and my relationship with God, is to give thanks.

You see, this is really, really helpful for us. You know, the Bible, just like a brief bit of a thing, but the Bible tells you lots of things about, has a very, very rich and nuanced understanding of suffering and trials and things like that that go on in lives.

There's a whole range of stories and the Bible is very deep and very, very wise and it's, you can spend your whole life studying the Bible and the Bible, God will continue to speak into your life in new ways as you open the scriptures and you go from cover to cover.

[21 : 08] And, you know, sometimes we're in a period of just things that are happening to us or just very bad and it might just be that we have to call out to God and one of the things that we might have to say to God is, Father, is this happening to me because I've sinned?

Are these things happening to me because, you know, that I've sinned? Father, do I have to come to you or is it a sin of commission or a sin of omission? Father, please reveal that to me and Father, if it is something going on in my life that, you know, I in a sense am bringing on because of what I've done, show it to me, Father, and then, Father, please help me, help me to understand, help me to seek amendment of life and to say that I'm sorry or, or Father, are you showing me that, is this happening to me because there's something you want me to know?

Is this happening to me because there's something that you want me to become? Is this happening to me because there's some new thing you want me to do in a new direction in my life and, Father, and here's, and here's, you see, maybe, so you see all these things, you pour out your heart to God.

God wants us in the middle of every situation and every circumstance to stop in a sense at least at one time during this situation, this circumstance, and turn to him and speak as God.

And in the midst of the range of questions and requests that you say to God, one of the things, and, you know, in terms of, it might be this. You might then have to say something, Father, I thank you that I don't have to deal with this alone.

[22 : 37] I thank you that you are with me. I thank you that you are wise. I thank you that you are power. And I don't, I don't, I'm going to try to list the things that you're to thank God for.

Pour out your circumstance, your heart to God and your circumstance. And I'm not just giving you bad things. It could be good things as well, you know, and it could be good things to go, Father, thank you so much for blessing me with this. Father, please, please deliver me from any type of pride or vanity or arrogance about this.

But Father, thank you. You've been so kind to me. I'm so thankful for you, to you, for what you've done. So it's not only just bad situations, it's in every circumstance to turn to God. And you know, when we're depressed or we're despondent or we're in pain or we're just unbelievably sad or we're in mourning, it might be very hard because we don't feel thankful to think of what we can say thank you to God for.

And that's what is so important because it calls us to think about who God is and what he's done for us. And often that, that's very, very important because, you know, our self is talking to us and saying all of these things and in a sense that God is just saying that comes a time, George, where you've just got to stop and in a sense try to shut off all that conversation that's coming into your head and turn and look to me and think of who I am and what I've done and just think of me.

And as you think of me and as you think of all of who I am, I want you to also be thankful for some of who I am. And that's what the Bible is telling us to do. If you put up the text again, oh, sorry, there, let's say it together.

[24 : 24] Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Now, what I've just described of stopping and giving thanks to God is always very hard.

Almost always very hard. It's hard to sustain it. And the reason is, if you could put up the point, here's the reason is, I am not a God in process.

I am a fallen creature. In our culture, it makes worse something that already goes on in every one of our souls and minds and hearts and wills.

It's easy for us to think that we are like a God in process, but we are not a God in process. We are fallen creatures. I'll give you an example and then I'll show you how it fits in with this text.

One of the common pieces of advice that you see, I read lots of novels and stuff, read newspapers, watch movies and all that. And one of the very common things you say, and I've actually heard Christians say this to other Christians, is that you need to learn to forgive yourself.

[25 : 32] Okay? I'm going to shock you all right now, but I'm going to tell you this. Don't forgive yourself. In fact, I'm going to make you even more shocked. Never forgive yourself.

Never forgive yourself. Now I got your attention. It's completely opposite of what the world says. Let me tell you this. Do it as an experiment. Go all the way through the Bible.

Look every time that the word forgiveness is or forgive and see if it ever in the Bible tells you to forgive yourself. Not once. Never tells you to do that. Why doesn't it tell you to do that?

God, you're not a God. You're not God. I don't want to depress you. You're not God. I'm not God.

My sin is against God and against the person I've wronged. And I might have to go to the person I've wronged and I might have to ask them for forgiveness because I've wronged.

[26 : 34] And every act of wrongdoing against another person or against myself is also an act of wrongdoing against God and I need to get his forgiveness. I am not a God to give myself forgiveness.

And you see, this is how it fits in with gratitude and thankfulness. I am not a God. I'm not supposed to come before God and say, oh God, I thank you so much that I have the right views on eschatology.

I'm not like all those foolish, fill in the blank, premillennialists, dispensationalists, amillennialists, postmillennialists. I thank you, God, that I have the right view on abortion. I have the right view on same-sex marriage.

I give you thanks and praise God that I have the correct views on politics. And you know, really all of these things, what you're doing is actually what you're doing is congratulating yourself.

And just as the Bible doesn't tell us to forgive ourselves, the Bible doesn't tell us to congratulate ourselves. If we congratulate ourselves, it's because we think that we're a God in process.

[27 : 42] And I don't want to depress you, but the truth is never depressing. The fact of the matter is you and I are not gods in process. Process. We are fallen creatures.

Fallen creatures. This has a very important consequence, but let's look at the text again, Andrew.

Put it up, please. Say it with me. Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

What the text is saying about being, about, when I said earlier that we're not a God in process but fallen creatures, what it's telling us, the Bible is, it's so deeply imbued in the Bible.

I mean, it's taught in Genesis chapter 1 and 2 and 3, but it's so deeply throughout the Bible that we miss it because nothing in the Bible makes sense without it.

I could have you read Genesis 1 and 2, but it's all the way through the Bible that we're creatures.

We're creatures. We're completely and utterly dependent. I'm dependent upon the earth spinning on its axis at a precise rate.

[28 : 57] I'm dependent upon the sun spinning around, the earth spinning around the sun at a precise speed. I'm dependent upon the earth being a specific distance from the sun.

I am dependent upon air. I'm dependent upon the chemicals in my head being correctly balanced.

I'm dependent upon the little neurons firing in the right order in the right way.

There's not a single thing in me that is not dependent on something else and external because I am a creature and so are you.

And our culture wants to make us think that we are like gods, but we're not. I'm not. You're not. I'm a creature. In fact, if you put this up, one way that we could rename ourselves as human beings, Andrew, is to say, who am I?

I am only need. That's who I am. I'm only need. I need oxygen. I need food. I need water. I need my body to work right. I need the planet to spin.

[30 : 05] I need the stars to be where they are. I am only need. And who is God? What's another name you could have for God? God, another name for God is never need, only give, only love.

It's another name for God. Never need, only give, only love. God has no environment. He has nothing that he needs. But he only gives because he's only love in it as of the nature of love to give. And that's why, you see, when the Bible is saying that it's to give thanks because it's the will of God in Christ Jesus for you, it's because it's just the Bible's telling us not to become some type of, as I've already said, you know, to feel a certain way all the time.

Drugs make you feel the same way all the time, and drugs ruin you if you take drugs to make you feel the same way all the time. Right? That's what they do. And it's not telling us to be a masochist, and it's not telling us to tell lies, and it's not telling us to be self-congratulatory.

The Bible's assuming that we understand that we're creatures and that we're fallen creatures, and that who we are is only need because I am creature. And who is God? God is never need, only give, only love.

[31 : 25] That's who God is. And so, in a sense, the deepest sense, since I am only need and God is never need, it means that in truth, I should be always grateful.

And there should be an almost limitless number of things that I could give thanks for. The physicists amongst us could literally say in their prayers, Father, thank you that the earth is, and you actually know the distance from the sun, thank you that the earth is traveling at this speed, thank you that the earth rotates at this rate, thank you for the ozone layer, and scientists could take all the scientific stuff we know about what it means to be creatures and what it means to have life on earth, and that could be a list of thanks to God.

Let's say the biblical text again together. Give with me, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. My wife is a dog walker, she walks her dogs, and I'm a runner.

And here's one of the differences between runners and dog walkers, is runners don't talk to each other. I mean, maybe if you have a running buddy and you run with your buddy, you talk with that, but runners don't talk to each other, because you're running.

And actually, between trying to fight for breath, and trying to deal with the pain all over your body from running, you wouldn't even be able to have much of a conversation anyway, because you're trying to deal with all those things.

[32 : 55] But things about dog walkers, is dog walkers meet each other, the dogs, you know, sniff and all that stuff. And then the people talk. So one day, my wife was telling me this afterwards. She was out walking to the dog. She met this older lady. They spent some time talking.

And she was really worried about her son, who was estranged from her. And not only was her son estranged from her, like not close to her and sort of ignoring her.

And I'm not making a political comment on this, by the way. I'm just, it's just a story, a true story. So I'm not making a political point. But one of her complaints about her son and worries about her son is that he'd become very right wing.

And he viewed himself as a self-made man. And he looked down his nose on other people who he thought didn't work hard enough and try hard enough.

And she said to my wife, but you know what? He grew up in a stable, secure home with books. We gave him every type of opportunity to learn and develop.

[33 : 55] We sent him to a really good university. And while he was at that good university, we paid for every penny for his tuition, every penny for his residence, every penny for things in between school years, so that he could have every opportunity.

And that when he was starting out, we paid every penny for him to get set up and established. And here he thinks that he's a self-made man and looks down his nose on people who maybe don't have much money and aren't as successful as he is.

And he thinks that if they just tried like he tried, they would be successful. And as the woman told the story, it's a very, very, and we can understand it.

But here's the thing. In a sense, I am, you and I are that young man, no longer a young man. You and I are that man.

Andrew put up the next theory. I am completely dependent upon God and completely estranged from God. Remember, my first point was that I am not a God in process, but I am a fallen creature. [35 : 12] and on one hand, I am only need and God is never need, only give, only love. And the great mystery of my existence is that I am completely and utterly dependent upon God and yet at the same time in my flesh I am estranged from him.

God is the one who has the neurons fire and the brain work properly and I use my brain to tell him to stay out of my affairs. God is the one that gives me the will and the mind to work and provides an environment and maybe has me.

I could have been born in Iraq. I could have been born in North Korea, but I'm born here in Canada. I had nothing to do with that. And I have all these advantages and at the same time that I receive advantage after advantage and gift after gift and need is met after need is met and I say, God, how dare you, how dare you have those views?

How dare you ask me to do this? Stay away from me, God. I'm not interested in you, God. I don't think you exist, God. And every single thing that I do like that, even if it's just ignoring God, I'm dependent upon God to ignore him.

And so are you. You see, that's why when we turn to God in every circumstance, in every situation, it's not just important that we turn to God in every situation and that we say a variety of things to him, but what needs to form us as we turn to him is not just an acknowledgement that God is great and that he's full of glory, that God is never need, only good, only love, and that he provides for me, he gives me the gift of existence, he, you couldn't list all of the things that we're dependent upon that God gives, but it's not just that we do that, that would just be like deism, it's also that I, I need to turn to him in light of what God, see, here's the mystery of the gospel, that the same God who even as I am estranged from him provides me air and food and just, he, all of my, he just provides at the same time when I'm estranged from him, he provides for that truth, that too, and he provides it all with nothing left over, with nothing added by me.

[38 : 01] In 1 Thessalonians 5 verses 9 and 10 which sort of frames this text, it says, for God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.

And notice what it says, for God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation. salvation. It's something we receive that God who gives all things, he, through the death of his son upon the cross, gives salvation and it's something that I am to obtain, that I am to receive.

And as the hymn said at the beginning, you might have missed it, but it's not in part, but in whole. The salvation that God is going to give is whole and complete. Why?

I am only need. And even when I rebel against him and even though I think that he doesn't exist and I'm estranged from him, I never am anything other than only need.

So even salvation has to be something that the one who needs nothing and only gives and only loves, he has to do it all.

[39 : 19] And he does it all through the gift of his son who dies upon the cross that I am estranged from him and he comes to me.

He crosses that infinite distance that I cannot begin to cross and he comes to me. and what Jesus does for me on the cross is something complete and utter that God does in Jesus for me.

And I can only obtain it. I can only receive it. I can never earn it or accomplish it or work for it.

I can never be a self made man. I can only receive what Jesus does on the cross because that is the means by which God can give salvation.

And at the end of all these practical disciples disciplines, how is the text framed verses 23 and 24 to bring the point home again? Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[40 : 37] God keeps it blameless. God sanctifies. He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. And so it is.

Whether I'm having it fantastic circumstances right now, things are going really, really well, or maybe there's things that are really not going very well, the Bible is inviting us in every circumstance and in every situation to turn to God.

And as we turn to God, we're to dwell on his greatness and his glory. And we are to dwell on the fact that even when we are estranged, Jesus Christ crucified is the means provided by God completely, utterly, thoroughly, with nothing left over, that provides the means by which I can become God's.

The estrangement is removed. And all I can do is receive it, never earn it, never attain it, never work for it, just receive it. And as I am in my circumstances, as I'm praying about my circumstances, as I'm asking for wisdom, as I'm asking for help, as I'm asking for direction, as I'm repenting in the midst of all of these things, I'm to still turn and thank him in light of his greatness and glory and in light of what his son has done for me on the cross.

And here's this final thing. Let's say the text and then I'll show you the final point. Let's say it together. Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

[42 : 10] Here's the thing that we are to understand when we turn to God in whatever situation we're in. If you put it up on the screen, Andrew, God is unchangeably wise and powerful.

Sorry, God is unchangeable. He's wise and powerful, kind and good, true and loving, wild and untamed. Who knows what he's going to do?

Can't put him in a box, can't tame him, can't put him on a leash, can't pat him on the head, say he's a good boy. And on one hand, it's the most frightening thing in the world to think that when you turn to God in your circumstances and your situations, you're turning to the God who has no needs and is completely and utterly wild and untamed.

And our only confidence is that he's wise and powerful, kind and good, true and loving. And that he sent his son to die upon the cross.

He himself provides all of salvation and we are to receive it. God. And so it is, that is the God and that is the context that we are to turn to in every circumstance and situation.

[43 : 25] And amongst the many things we say, one of them is thank you. And his greatness and his glory and the gift of Jesus and him being wild and untamed is the context of our thankfulness to him.

Please stand. Let's just bow our heads in prayer.

Father, we give you thanks and praise that you know every single person here in this room and you know us completely and utterly perfectly. We thank you, Father, that you know, not only do you see the mask we're wearing right now, you know every mask we have in our arsenal.

You know how, you know even the way we go from mask to mask to mask to mask. You see every mask, every maneuver, and you see us as we really are. You see us, Father, and you know even the dreams at night that we don't remember.

Father, you know all of those. You know us perfectly. And still you love us. And still you sent your son to die upon the cross for us. And still, Father, when we come to Jesus and accept him as our Savior and Lord and receive what he has done for us, what only you can accomplish and what you accomplish in your son.

[44 : 50] Father, we thank you for this. We thank you for it. And we ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would move and work deeply in our lives so that in every circumstance and situation that we would pause and turn to you and that we would dwell on your greatness, that we would dwell on your glory, that we would dwell on your wisdom, and we would dwell on your power, and we would dwell on what your son did for us on the cross, what he won for us on the cross, and what you offer us through the cross and through your son.

And, Father, we ask that that would form us as we turn to you and talk to you. And in all of our pouring out of our heart to you, Father, and we ask that you would teach us and help us to pour out our heart to you.

We ask as well, Father, that we would give you thanks in our different circumstances. Father, make us a prayerful people. Make us disciples gripped by the gospel, living for your glory.

And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Please take a posture of prayer as we enter into a time of intercession. As we enter this time of prayer, please feel free to take whatever position helps you to communicate with God our Father.

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus, precious Holy Spirit, our wonderful triune God, we praise and thank you for your love and care for us.

[46 : 21] As our country prepares to celebrate our national day, we praise and thank you for our temporal home here in Canada and all the freedoms we enjoy. We pray that you will bless all our leaders, federal, provincial, and municipal, and that you grant them open and willing hearts to seek

your will for the good of all.

Bless and keep those in all the services, both at home and abroad, whose role it is to keep us safe from harm. And help us to choose gratitude, especially for our salvation.

Let us pray. Dear God, may the leaders of the nations rule with righteousness and may they...