

The Power and Liberty of Gratitude (Phil 4:4-7)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Complaining damages relationships—marriage, family, and friendships. Complaining is not a personality type, but a way of processing information. It is a mindset that anyone can change.
- ¹⁴Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵that you may become blameless and harmless...[and] shine as lights in the world... (Phil. 2:14-15)***
1. Complaining is a mindset that focuses on the negative more than on the positive.
 2. Complaining is based on a feeling that we deserve to be treated better by God or people.
 3. Complaining emphasizes *what we do not have* more than *what we do have*. It is based on idealism about how good our circumstances or relationships should be all the time. We naturally focus on *what we do not have* instead of the *wealth that we have in Christ*.
 4. Complaining gives expression to accusations against God and others (Rev. 12:10).
- B. Foundational to a strong family is the intentional cultivation of gratitude in the family culture.
- C. Gratitude is based on believing that the Lord has given us more than what we deserve.
- ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always...⁵Let your gentleness [*graciousness*] be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:4-7)***
1. ***Rejoice in the Lord*** (4:4)—focus on seeing what God sees when He looks at our life. Rejoicing in the Lord, gratitude, and giving thanks to God exhibit the same mindset. Gratitude is set forth as foundational to Christian living. It is at the heart of worship.
 2. ***The Lord is at hand*** (4:5)—the Lord’s eyes are on us and He intervenes in our life according to His way and timing. Gratitude releases the Lord’s presence in our life.
 3. ***Be anxious for nothing*** (4:6)—we war against anxiety with gratitude. Satan, the accuser, cannot work effectively in the presence of gratitude.
 4. ***By prayer, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God*** (4:6)—those who cultivate a mindset of gratitude will pray with greater faith, consistency, and joy.
 5. ***The peace of God will guard your hearts and minds*** (4:7)—there is a strong link between a mindset of gratitude and peace in our emotions.

6. *Let your gentleness be known to all men* (4:5)—we are called to express the graciousness to others that we have received freely from the Lord.

II. GROWING IN A SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE

- A. Ingratitude is the result of taking lightly the wealth of God’s goodness given to us.
⁴Or do you despise [take lightly] the riches of His goodness... not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance (Rom. 2:4)
- B. The Lord sees His glory in His people even though much of it is hidden from us in this age.
³For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Col. 3:3-4)
- C. The testimony of the Seraphim is that the whole earth is filled with God’s glory (Isa. 6:3).
³And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy...the whole earth is full of His glory!” (Isa. 6:3)
- D. We are transformed by changing how we think. Transformation in our life and emotions begins by seeing ourselves in the way God sees us in Christ. Renewing our mind includes interpreting our life through the “lens of grace”—or how we *evaluate our life, establish our identity, measure our success, see our future, and process our failures and value weak people.*
²...be transformed by the renewing of your mind... (Rom. 12:2)
- E. *Accepted by God:* We are freely accepted by God and receive His favor as a gift. Knowing that God’s grace is stronger than the penalty and guilt of our sin gives us confidence in His presence. The Lord delights in His people and enjoys His relationship with them. We are sons of God and the Bride of Christ who partner with Him forever as “sons of the resurrection” (Lk. 20:36).
- F. *Empowered by the Spirit:* We are vessels or stewards of God’s presence as ambassadors. We have the *authority of Jesus’ name* and the *indwelling Spirit*, which enable us to resist sin, sickness, and Satan and to release the works of God and the presence of the Spirit.
- G. *God’s gracious leadership:* His leadership is wise, generous, and merciful—Jesus sees our life through the lens of grace—viewing it very differently from how we see it. He evaluates our life, defines our success, and measures our fruitfulness by grace. He values our small deeds and efforts to love, serve, and obey Him. We have a relevant and lasting purpose in God. Every day is relevant as we do God’s will. Our small deeds so move Him that He rewards us for them.

- H. Jesus is the most generous, beautiful, kind, attentive, and powerful Man who is moved by and graciously answers our weak prayers. Eternal rewards are Jesus expressing how He feels about the way we loved Him. He rewards “so well” because He is so kind. We receive eternal rewards for all that we do in the will of God because Jesus evaluates our life so graciously and responds to us so generously. He rewards even our smallest deeds, like giving a cup of water in His name (Mt. 10:42). He gives us far greater rewards than we deserve by our small, weak deeds.

- I. The Lord sees the genuineness of our weak love and desire to obey Him. He defines our ***primary success in life*** as being ones who are loved by God and who love God with gratitude. Our confession is “*I am loved by God and I love God; therefore I am successful.*”