

A Thankful Heart Is A Spirit-filled Heart Ephesians 4:18-20

Thanksgiving week generally means extra cooking. Hopefully these mishaps aren't your experience.

According to a Fox news station, a Connecticut man was on his way to a friend's house for Thanksgiving with turkey and stuffing in hand, when he was held up at gunpoint. Not only did the thief take his wallet he also took the man's turkey and fixings. After the police officers learned the 911 call was in fact not a joke, they went to Boston Market and bought the man two Thanksgiving dinners.

The American Red Cross reports that the most common holiday disaster is house fires, which occur twice as often on Thanksgiving Day than any other day of the year.

Ursula noted that she and her husband make a good team. Just about the time she starts cooking the Thanksgiving dinner, he takes the batteries out of the smoke detectors.

One lady reported that the first year she cooked Thanksgiving dinner, she forgot to take the liver, neck, and giblets out of the body of the turkey. She also added salt instead of sugar in the pumpkin pie. The next Thanksgiving was at her sister-in-law's. She set her deck on fire frying the turkey.

If you want Thanksgiving dinner cooked somewhere else, follow the cooking instructions of Lu who on her first-time cooking Thanksgiving dinner used sweetened condensed milk, instead of evaporated milk by accident. She hasn't had to cook Thanksgiving dinner since.

Thanksgiving is a time focused on giving thanks. **So this year, what are you thankful for?** With your Bibles open to **Ephesians 5:18-20** we want to see from this passage three points that show us that a Spirit-filled believer is thankful. Consider these three truths from our text:

Thanksgiving begins with God's Spirit
Thanksgiving blesses God's servants
Thanksgiving belongs to God Himself

You might find it a bit peculiar to begin a message about thanksgiving with a verse that opens with not being drunk with wine, but you will see in a moment the correlation between **v. 18** and **v. 19-20**.

Let's start with understanding why thanksgiving begins with God's Spirit.

I. THANKSGIVING BEGINS WITH GOD'S SPIRIT – v. 18

There is an old Chinese proverb that says:
First, the man takes a drink
Then the drink takes a drink
Then the drink takes the man.

We all know the chronic effects of alcohol when it is consumed in excess. It slows down the chemicals and pathways your brain uses to control your body, rendering the person incapable of making rational decisions, slowing down reflexes and affecting balance, altering mood and sleep. The person who consumes too much alcohol is under the influence of the effects of alcohol.

Paul likens a person who is completely controlled by the Holy Spirit to a person who is completely controlled by alcohol. In the same way that alcohol controls the thoughts, words and actions of the person, the believer is to be under the control of the Holy Spirit in thoughts, words, and actions. Paul uses this analogy to help us see that for the believer who is thankful must be controlled by the Holy Spirit. For this to happen, the thankful believer must be in communion with the Holy Spirit.

A. The Thankful Believer Is In Communion With God's Spirit

According to Paul, if the affect of the control of alcohol leads to wickedness, then the control of the Holy Spirit leads to a thankfulness. The closer we are to the Holy Spirit, the more we are under His control, yielding ourselves to His influence in our lives, the more thankful we should become.

This filling by the Holy Spirit is a command and a continuous action. This is different from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. His indwelling

happens automatically and instantaneously at the moment of salvation where we are brought into the body of Christ sealing us until the day of Redemption when Christ returns to claim His bride comprised of every believer.

The word “filled” in **verse 18** refers to something that is a continuous day by day, moment by moment conscience decision on our part to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us, control us, and influence our choices, our conversation, and our conduct.

When I played basketball, I was under the influence of the coach. Even though I was the one on the court, he was the one influencing how I played.

When we listen to the Holy Spirit and obey His control over our lives, He influences how we live and the direction He wants us to go through the Word of God that He authored, when we read it.
Psalm 37:23 “The steps of a righteous man are ordered by the Lord and he delights in His way.”

Psalm 119:105 “Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.”

II Timothy 3:16-17

The Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of Scripture uses it to challenge, correct, and change the person who reads it as he allows the Holy Spirit to affect change that matures the believer into Christ like character. We limit the work of the Holy Spirit if we are not hearing, reading, studying and striving to obey what God’s Word teaches.

The more we are in the Word of God, the more influence the Holy Spirit has on us and the more thankful we will become. I can make a claim for that by just noting that those who somehow feel entitled are generally those who are not under the influence of the Holy Spirit and also less likely to be thankful people.

Romans 1:21 “For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

When a believer is in communion with the Spirit of

God, there is a direct correlation to thankfulness. It stands to reason then that the further away a person is from God’s Spirit, or if a person does not have the Spirit dwelling in them, they will be unthankful. If you are in communion with the Holy Spirit, then the next point is more evident. The thankful believer is controlled by God’s Spirit.

B. The Thankful Believer Is Controlled By God’s Spirit

As we have said, when we talk about being filled with or controlled by the Holy Spirit, we are referring to our conduct, how we live.

Galatians 5:16-25

Notice the control of the Spirit in these verses.
Verse 16 – The believer is to walk by the Spirit
Verse 18 – The believer is to be led by the Spirit
Verse 25 – The believer keeps in step with the Spirit. It means to walk in line with. It’s a different Greek word than used for live by or walk by.

If you watch a couple dancing, you notice that generally it is the man who leads, while the woman follows. Both excel when the woman is moving in step with the man.

GotQuestions gives five ways the Spirit-filled believer keeps in step with the Spirit that will not only produce godly character, but a thankful heart.

- 1. The Spirit-filled believer follows the Spirit’s desires.** From **verse 17**, the believer living by the Spirit avoids the desires of the sinful nature because they are in direct conflict with the fruit of the Spirit. If we are living by the Spirit, it is because we are heeding **Philippians 2:13 “For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.”** The Spirit-filled believer doesn’t try to live a godly life in his own strength, but in the power of God’s Spirit.
- 2. The Spirit-filled believer dwells in the Scripture.** **Psalm 1:2 “His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.”** If a woman doesn’t know the dance step, she can’t keep up with her partner.

Similarly, we can't keep in step with the Spirit if we are not in the Word of God, which teaches us how we are to live.

The other night Robyn went to make some Carmel corn only to discover that she couldn't find the recipe. To attempt making it without the instructions would have been disastrous.

Trying to live a godly life without the recipe found in God's Word will not bode well for the believer. We can only take godly steps if we are in the Word of God, allowing it to transform our minds, which in turn guides our steps in right directions that are controlled of the Holy Spirit.

3. The Spirit-filled believer examines his fruit.

You will notice in **verses 19-23** the contrast between the fruit of the flesh and fruit of the Spirit. The kind of fruit you display determines whether it is the flesh or the Spirit that is in control. Among the fruit developed by the Spirit is joy. The result of joy is thankfulness. When we are yielding our lives to the working of the Holy Spirit in us, our desire is to want to obey God's principles. The more we yield, the more we develop that fruit, the more thankful we are.

4. **The Spirit-filled believer prioritizes love.** We are told in **Galatians 5:13** that we are to serve one another in love. The underlying motivating character trait that drives all the others in our nature is love. A believer living by the Holy Spirit will live by this principle. Biblical love toward others pleases God. A person who is then loving as God would have us love others, has a thankful heart.

5. The Spirit-filled believer depends on God.

This is a daily, conscious decision to follow Him, instead of thinking that we can do it on our own. It is the desire to remain in constant fellowship with Him.

The Spirit-filled believer will always be thankful because he is in communion with and controlled by the Spirit through the Word of God. Thanksgiving not only begins with God's Spirit, we

see next that thanksgiving blesses God's servants.

II. THANKSGIVING BLESSES GOD'S SERVANTS – v. 19

First of all, our thanksgiving is outward.

A. Our Thanksgiving Is Outward – v. 19a “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.”

Psalms literally means praise.

At the pastors conference Robyn and I attended in early October, one of the gifts we received was a book titled Psalms of Grace. It is a compilation of all 150 Psalms set to music. For centuries the Psalms were the primary music of the church. But there was a period of time from AD 500 to AD 1500 where the congregation sat as spectators listening to professional musicians. That began to change at the time of the Reformation.

The psalms were generally sung with strummed instruments like the harp. And as you might expect the psalms were taken directly from Scripture, which means they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. They spoke of the work and nature of God, who He is and what He has done. While many of the Psalms are cries to God for help on behalf of the writer or for the nation of Israel, all are intended in some way to be themes of worship.

Psalm 42:11

Psalm 71:13-15

One of the great things about the Psalms is that even though they were written about specific events in the life of the writer or about the nation, they are timeless and just as appropriate for us today.

Psalm 71:8, 22-24

Hymns are an acknowledgment or designation of praise, honor, or thanksgiving to God. Hymns are not divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit and although they many contain Scripture, they are not part of Scripture but are rich in doctrinal truth.

When I was chaplain for hospice, I visited with a dear saint who loved the Lord. She once told me that

any minister should be able to pick up a hymnal and preach a sermon because of their Biblical content.

John Phillips writes “Hymnbooks are an excellent means of teaching and reinforcing truth” I’ll add that that hymns teach Biblical Doctrine and even incorporate Scripture memory.

Hymns are songs of praise and adoration. Many are timeless classics that are sung from generation to generation. They are from the pens of people like Martin Luther – *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*
Charles Wesley – *And Can It Be?*
Isaac Watts – *I Sing the Mighty Power of God*
John Newton – *Amazing Grace*
Fanny Crosby – *To God Be the Glory*

There are many others that will never go out of style like *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty* or *Wonderful Grace of Jesus*.

Hymns are the backbone of our hymnals and clearly biblical in text and context. They are for public and private worship. In the case of our passage, we see that these hymns are sung to each other, providing encouragement as we unite in an expression of adoration, praise, and worship to God.

Hymns were also part of Jewish worship as we see that following the Last Supper and communion of Jesus with His disciples, we read that after they had sung a hymn, they went out (**Matthew 26:30**).

The third component of thanksgiving toward others includes spiritual songs. These have been described as soulful music. They are songs of testimony like *The Old Rugged Cross*, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, and *I’d Rather Have Jesus*. They include choruses, light compositions, and Christian ballads. Some rise to notoriety and have an impact on believers, but generally only last a generation or two. While believers are to express their faith in song, it is not just any song, but spiritual songs. The songs of the church must have spiritual themes. I know of churches that want to be more appealing to non-Christians who attend so they have a prelude that incorporates secular music that segues into spiritual songs. The songs of the church must be spiritual not secular.

Spiritual songs may not directly praise God, but they teach some Biblical truth, encourage the body of Christ in some way, or encourage believers to love each other and serve God more. They might speak about being joyful in our salvation or they celebrate Christ or exalt the power of God like Rich Mullins – *Our God Is An Awesome God*, *Let’s Just Praise the Lord* by Bill and Gloria Gaither or *He Is Exalted* by Twilla Paris.

When we are filled with the Spirit, we will want to encourage each other with all kinds of music. His music in our hearts is not hindered by someone who only sings one note or is off key and neither is it His music enhanced by having a musical degree.

My Dad sang in a community church choir and stood by a guy who made up some new notes that weren’t on the piano keyboard. It would bother my dad until one day he came to the realization that he was there to give glory to God through his singing just as much as Dad was.

The music God looks for and blesses others is one that is Spirit-filled. It is different from the music of the world. We may sing as robustly as anyone else in a gathering of worshipers but our words fall short of worship if we are not Spirit-filled.

Johann Sebastian Bach is considered to be the greatest musician of all time and rightly so because he once stated that “the aim of all music is to the glory of God.”

Spirit-filled singing has a tremendous affect on the person who sings or listens. Physicians in the 17th and 18th centuries understood the value of music and often prescribed it to mentally disturbed patients. Scientific research has shown that music makes a person more relaxed whether it’s in a dentist’s chair, an elevator, or in the office. It can affect you physically and mentally either for good or bad impacting muscles, nerves, the flow of body fluids like blood. It can influence metabolism, heart rate and pulse. And while science can’t prove the spiritual benefit of music, there is no question that it has a direct correlation to our mood in praising God

when we are walking by the Spirit. It has a positive effect on how we respond to others and to our circumstances. If you get in my car and the radio is on, it will be tuned to a Christian station.

In their commentary, Walvoord and Zuck write that **“Church music, should be a means of believers’ ministering to each other, and singing should be a means of worshipping the Lord.”**

I have been in churches where the music was so loud, I couldn’t hear those leading or the person standing next to me. Even though the words may have been appropriate, the tone of the music was not worshipful to me. It was a hindrance and not a help in worshipping God.

The Spirit-filled believer expresses thanksgiving toward others in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. When we are Spirit-filled, the songs we sing and the way we sing will fill up their spiritual tank. It is a natural manifestation of the heart that is living by the Spirit.

Paul then adds that thanksgiving is inward, not that we praise ourselves, but that we have a heart that resonates gratitude toward God.

B. Our Thanksgiving Is Inward – v. 19b **“Making melody in our heart.”**

Psalm 40:3 says that God put **“a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.”**

GotQuestions **“A new song is one that arises from the spirit of a person whose heart overflows with adoration for God. A Spirit-filled person is a singing person. One clear indication that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit is a natural desire to sing and praise God. Musical ability has little to do with it. God created us to find great spiritual expression through music.”**

Judges 5:3 **“Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers! I will sing to the Lord, I will sing; I will make music to the Lord, the God of Israel.”**

Psalm 135:3 **“Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praise to His name, for that is pleasant.”**

Psalm 33:1-3 **“Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise Him. Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to Him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.”**

Scripture encourages us to sing. Your ability doesn’t matter, but your heart does. The Spirit-filled believer will have a heart that is ready to sing with a melody that pleases God.

The term **“making melody”** literally means to pluck on a stringed instrument. Over time it came to include the use of any instrument and implies that it is something used while singing. Notice again that our songs originate in the heart, a heart that is led by the Spirit.

Does your heart have a song to sing?

I have a song I love to sing,
Since I have been redeemed.
Of my Redeemer, Savior, King,
Since I have been redeemed.

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In our recent men’s study, we discussed setting spiritual goals for the coming year. One of the things Pastor Jim encouraged us to do is not only consider a verse that we will live by for the year, but also to pick a song.

Some authors have compiled various verses to claim for any given situation like when we are discouraged or fearful or undergoing temptation. I think we can do the same with music.

When we are fearful or sad – *It Is Well With My Soul*

When we are lonely – *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*

When we don’t know what to do – *He Leadeth Me*

When facing trials – *Victory in Jesus*

When facing temptation – *Faith is the Victory*

My Mom always enjoyed music, but it took on new meaning for her during the months of being bed ridden from cancer. In it she found strength, courage, and hope to face each day. It gave her joy.

I am finding strength in hymns and songs. Some of

the songs we sing during our opening worship are of special encouragement to me.

Living Hope

Wonderful, Merciful Savior

Revelation Song

I Speak Jesus

Gratitude

Find a song you can sing and let it speak to your heart and speak from your heart. Find a hymnal and use it in your devotions each day. Let it, along with Scripture set the tone for your day.

Our thanksgiving is outward.

Our thanksgiving is inward. But ultimately, our thanksgiving is upward.

C. Our Thanksgiving Is Upward – v. 19c – “to the Lord”

If we are Spirit-filled, we will want all our music to be praise to Him.

Revelation 5:9-10 “And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because You were slain, and with Your blood You purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.’”

When we consider all that Christ has done for us in providing salvation for us, all His daily provisions, all the blessings we receive from Him, He deserves all our praise and thanksgiving. As Bach said, the purpose of music is to glorify God and we are to use this wonderful gift as a way of worshipping Him.

There is a legend that came out of medieval times in which two angels were sent to earth. One angel was to collect all the petitions. The other was to collect all the thanksgivings. When they were ready to return to heaven, the angel who was to collect all the petitions couldn't carry them all, while the angel who had collected the thanksgivings was able to carry them back in one hand.

How much time do I spend asking for things and forget to give thanks. No matter what circumstances we are facing be reminded that we are to give

thanks in all things because it is God's will for you (**I Thes. 5:18**). **Do you have a song you love to sing? Is there a song that encourages you?**

I mentioned a song a couple weeks ago by the Imperials that has brought me strength in this past year – *Praise the Lord*. Another one by Casting Crowns – *I Will Praise You in the Storm*.

While we sing to others and to ourselves, is our thanksgiving toward our Savior?

Let's close by looking at **verse 20**. Here we see that our thanksgiving belongs to God Himself.

III. THANKSGIVING BELONGS TO GOD HIMSELF – v. 20

There is nothing that we have or do that doesn't come from the Lord. Therefore, all our thanks should be directed to Him.

In this verse I see two things.

A. Our Praise Is To Be Perpetual – v. 20a

B. Our Praise Is To Be Personal – v. 20b

We are to continuously overflow with praise and thanksgiving.

James 1:2 “Consider it pure joy when you fall into various trials...”

I Thessalonians 5:18 “Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Warren Wiersbe says that **“The devil moves in when a Christian starts to complain, but thanksgiving in the Spirit defeats the devil and glorifies the Lord.”**

Gratitude comes from the same word as grace, so knowing God's grace should bring gratitude.

Joni Earekson Tada who knows quite a bit about pain and trials has said that **“giving thanks isn't a matter of feeling but of obedience.”**

Do we thank God when things go wrong, when there is injustice, death, sickness, or when loved ones stray from the faith? Do we thank God in all things? Can we sing praise when life is hard?

The sweetest song often comes from the hardest trials and the deepest pain.

Thanksgiving is never to be directed to us, but always to God. He alone is worthy of all praise.

Revelation 4:11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being.”

Revelation 7:12 “Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!”

The first point of the Westminster Catechism asks:

1. What is the chief end of man?

Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

We along with all of creation have been created for the express purpose of giving praise and thanks to God and no one else. It is to be ongoing and to Him alone.

Not to us, O Lord
Not to us, O Lord
But to Thy name give glory
To Thy name give praise

Not to us, O Lord
Not to us, O Lord
But to Thy name give glory
To Thy name give praise

As children of a mighty King
We make our lives an offering
All we have, we bring to give
The honor and the love
That You alone are worthy of

Not to us, O Lord
Not to us, O Lord
But to Thy name give glory
To Thy name give praise

We were weak, You made us strong
Gave us hope when hope was gone
So, when we lift our song of praise
With single voice and mind
Our thankful hearts will always say...

Not to us, O Lord
Not to us, O Lord
But to Thy name give glory
To Thy name give praise

**Thanksgiving begins with God’s Spirit
Thanksgiving blesses God’s servants
Thanksgiving belongs to God Himself**

To God Be the Glory, Great Things He Hath Done.

William Arthur Ward says that “God gave you 86,400 seconds today. Have you used one to say ‘thank you’?”