

Victorious – A Spirit of Gratitude

11/23/25

Romans 16:1-27

Sunday AM

As we prepare for a wonderful week of Thanksgiving, it's rather appropriate that we end our Victorious series in Romans 16 where Paul offered a shout out to all the people who encouraged, helped, served, and sacrificed so he could fulfill his calling in ministry.

SEE – Paul recognized that he didn't do ministry in a vacuum. So, he constantly was sharing his gratitude to every one God placed around him. In fact, if you erased every 'thank you' in Paul's epistles, they'd be almost unrecognizable b/c each one was drenched in appreciation for God and for people.

God-ronically – I happened to read this passage during Pastor's Appreciation month when you all were so kind w/ your prayers/encouragement to me. I was reminded of how thankful I am for you and the amazing privilege my family has to serve alongside you for the sake of the Gospel. For how blessed we are by your encouragement, support, help, and service.

Sadly – in our modern culture, appreciation/gratitude has fallen on hard times. In many ways, thankfulness as gone the way of respect – that is, everyone wants it, but no one wants to give it.

But what if I told you that gratitude is a fruit of the H.S. and is evidence of a spirit-filled life?

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace – and be thankful. Colossians 3:15

Be filled w/ the Spirit, speaking to one another w/ psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:18-20

Point – having a spirit of gratitude is a spiritual issue. If you have an appreciation problem – or think people should be showing you gratitude – then it's likely b/c someone or something other than Jesus is sitting on the throne of your life. Whereas, if you're walking in the Spirit – you can't help but be grateful to God/others.

WTM – just in time for Turkey Day, I want to offer you (6) precepts for living grateful life of appreciation.

T – **TREASURE** the People God Has Given You

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me...

Paul didn't see people as expendable; he saw them as treasures. He didn't just say, I'm thankful, he named the people he appreciated – Phoebe, Priscilla, Aquila, Epenetus, Mary, Andronicus, Junia, and many more.

WHY? B/c each of these names represented a story, a sacrifice, and a personal relationship that all played a significant role in Paul's story.

I think Paul is modeling for us an important lesson – we can either use things and treasure people – or we can use people and treasure things. Sadly, too often, too many of us fall into the trap of using people and valuing things. Paul modeled that ***people*** must always come before *power, possessions, pleasure, and pride*.

WTM – let me encourage to make your own Romans 16 list – write down the names of the people God has used in your life to *bless, shape, and influence* you.

Next – pray for those people this week and write them a card/text, or call them to share you're appreciation for them and how God has used them in your life.

H – **HONOR** Those Who Labor in the Lord

Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you... Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Rm. 16:12

I appreciate that Paul publicly honored those who privately labored. He recognized their service. In case you didn't notice, most of the names in Romans 16 never appear again in Scripture – they were obscure, everyday believers that if not for Paul would've gone completely unnoticed.

These are the people we need to see and thank often. The people behind the scenes who make things happen that we often take for granted – the sound/video techs, intercessors, door greeters, quiet encouragers, cooks, and custodians. And while I'm truly thankful for each of these – we have some people who I consider to be the real heroes in our church – and those are the people who faithfully serve w/ our children/students.

Parents, we'd all do well to gush over Ms. Lisa, Ms. Mandy, Pastor Jordan and all who give of the lives to invest the Jesus in them into our kids.

This week – take a moment to express your gratitude to those who care for your kids and who give their time to make a spiritual investment in your life and family.

Ask God to help you “see the unseen” – the people who are faithfully serving around you who rarely get thanked. Then intentionally encourage, text, call, or write one of these hidden servants.

A – **ACKNOWLEDGE** the Sacrifices of Others

They risked their lives for me. Romans 16:4

I love this b/c Paul never forgot the cost others paid. We know from other passages that Priscilla and Aquila risked their lives for the Gospel. Andronicus and Junia shared prison cells w/ him. Many others risked their homes, their financial well-being, and reputations.

Point – gratitude deepens when we connect another person's face w/ their sacrifices. Whether it's a sacrifice of finances, time, relationships, or reputation.

Question – who in your life has quietly paid a price so you could follow Christ, grow in Christ, or serve Christ? If possible, let them know this week your gratitude and appreciation for their sacrifice.

N – **NURTURE** a Culture of Encouragement

What is encouragement? Encouragement is gratitude spoken out loud, regularly and specifically. It is the assembling of words that inspire, motivate, and give courage to a person or group of people that moves them to action.

All thru Romans 16, Paul is doing more than offering a word of appreciation, he setting an example and establishing a standard of gratitude w/in the church so that the church is inspired to love God w/ all of their heart, mind, soul, and spirit – and love their neighbors as they want to be loved by God.

This is the value of being an instigator of gratitude – you help build a culture of encouragement.

H.S.-inspired gratitude doesn't just *notice* the good in a person; it values and nurtures what affirming words can do that strengthen a community b/c it influences the entire environment.

Ask – What kind of culture am I creating in my home, at work, or at church? Critical or encouraging? And choose to become Romans 16 encourager who makes it normal to say, “I see God at work in you.”

K – **KEEP** Alert to Ungrateful People

I urge you to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.

Have you heard the phrase – *It's hard to soar like an eagle when you're hanging out w/ a bunch of turkeys.*

I think Paul is reminding us that w/ ***those whom we assemble we soon resemble.***

Stay away from negative people. They have a problem for every solution. Albert Einstein

Personally, I've come to agree that most people are the average of the (5) people they spend the most time w/. Why? B/c these are the people who most shape and influence what we say, think, value, like, and dislike. Thus, if you hang w/ a bunch of negative Nelly's you're likely to become a negative person too.

I agree w/ Mandy Hale who said – *look around you at the people you spend the most time w/ and realize that your life can't rise any higher than your friendships.*

Bad company corrupts good morals. 1 Cor. 15:33

Listen – I know this might be hard to believe, but Paul is warning the Roman believers that these people can be found w/in the 4-walls of the church.

Personally, I can testify. I can't tell you the number of church members I've seen influenced and dragged away by carnal, negative church-goers.

Thus, we must be able to recognize that an ungrateful, negative soul is the result of a person out of sync w/ God. No matter how much they spiritualize/baptize their negativity – they're not walking in the Spirit.

Paul says – be alert to these people b/c they'll quickly lead you away/astray from God if you're not careful.

S – **STAY** Filled with the Holy Spirit

I shared earlier that gratitude is a spiritual issue and is proof of a spirit-filled life. Thus, we can't...

- **T – Treasure** the people God has given us
- **H – Honor** those who labor in the Lord
- **A – Acknowledge** the sacrifices of others
- **N – Nurture** a culture of encouragement
- **K – Keep** alert to ungrateful people

Unless we remain filled and in sync w/ the H.S. b/c none of this is sustainable in our own strength/ability.

Why – b/c gratitude isn't just a personality trait; it's a work of the H.S. in you living thru you.

Be filled w/ the Spirit... always giving thanks to God the Father for everything... Ephesians 5:18-20

Being filled w/ the Spirit and living a thankful life go hand-in-hand. You can't have one w/out the other.

If left to ourselves, we'd drift toward grumbling, not gratitude; entitlement, not appreciation. So, when gratitude dries up, it's not just a bad mood – it's a ***warning light*** that we're trying to live the Christian life in our own strength instead of in the H.S.'s power.

But when we're led by the Spirit – like Paul, we'll start seeing people as gifts, not problems; co-laborers, not competitors. We will stay sensitive to His promptings – those little nudges to thank someone, to encourage, and to stop complaining and start praising.

So how do we stay filled?

- Stay in the **Word** so it's truth can shape your life
- Stay in **prayer** so you're in constant contact w/ God
- Stay in **worship** so God can sit on your throne
- Stay in **obedience** so the H.S. nudges you can act

Bottomline – Gratitude must be said/shown. Biblical gratitude – **SAYS** thank you | **SHOWS** thank you | **SHARES** what it has received.