

**AN ENCOURAGING WORD FOR TROUBLING TIMES #125 (by Rev. Dr. Alice Wolfe, 9/22/20)  
“Be thankful in ALL circumstances?”**

A few days ago, my daughter asked me what I like about each season. In spring, I love seeing the flowers bloom, the trees bud, and the world come back to life. In summer, I enjoy the warm weather. In fall, I love seeing the leaves turn brilliant colors. In winter, I look forward to spring coming! (With Raynaud’s, my hands get very cold once the temperature gets below 70.) There’s always something for which we can be thankful!

All this reminds of God’s encouragement to us through the Apostle Paul:

“...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18, NIV)

Paul didn’t really mean we are to give thanks in all circumstances; did he? He probably just meant most of the time; right? Paul meant what he said. But (we argue), Paul doesn’t know what life is like for us in the USA in 2020! You’re right..., but Paul faced worse circumstances. In Paul’s life, he was imprisoned frequently (for sharing the Good News); flogged severely; exposed to death again and again; received 39 lashes from Jews (5 times); beaten with rods (3 times); stoned (by rocks, not drugs); shipwrecked (3 times); spent a night and day adrift at sea; was constantly on the move; was in danger from rivers, bandits, his own people, and people who didn’t believe in Jesus; he was in danger in the city, country, and at sea; he went without sleep, food, and water; and he had been left cold and naked (2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

How could Paul give thanks in all those circumstances? He learned to be content through Christ who gave him strength (Phil. 4:11-13). Paul found strength in Christ—He knew Jesus was always with him—and Jesus was all he needed; he knew that nothing was impossible for Christ; and he knew that his eternal rewards would far outweigh his temporary troubles.

We are facing many trials and troubles in this world—and some worse than we are—but all of us, like Paul, can learn to live according to God’s will and give thanks to God in ALL circumstances. No matter how bad things are, remember that Jesus loves you and is with you; he will never leave you or forsake you. Nothing is impossible for God; he’s got this; he’s got you! If God can raise Jesus from the dead, God can raise you from the deadness of your sins and give you new, eternal life! These troubles we face today are only temporary. Although they aren’t as temporary as we might like, they will not last forever—but Jesus and life in Christ will. Our troubles will eventually go away, but Christ will not!

Therefore, regardless of the season, regardless of your struggles, regardless of your trials, GIVE THANKS TO GOD IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, FOR THIS IS GOD’S WILL FOR YOU IN CHRIST JESUS!

**PRAYER:**

Loving God, thank you for your never-ending, unconditional love! Thank you for all my blessings [name them to God]... Forgive me for my sins [name them to God]... and for the times I have complained... Help me to live in you and in your will. Thank you for Jesus and the forgiveness and new life I have in him. Help me choose to give thanks in all circumstances (even you are all I have)—so others can see Christ in me! Amen.

**LIVE IT!**

Choose to be thankful. Live each day thanking God for your blessings and praying for others.