

Roots in Ripon

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Chuck Roots

21 November 2016

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Always Thankful

Thankfulness is a decision of the heart. It is an attitude that you decide to embrace in the face of all that life throws at you. This is one of the reasons why I have always appreciated this passage from the Bible which says, *"In everything, give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*

I will admit that this passage threw me for a loop in my early days as a Christian. I was twenty-four, knowing little about the Bible or Jesus or anything else pertaining to living a life for God. Thankfulness was one of the first sensations I experienced the moment I accepted Jesus as my Savior. As a sergeant in the Marine Corps I was not exactly a boy scout. I didn't grow up attending church except on rare occasions with the family. And the church we attended at those infrequent times wasn't even Christian.

The thankfulness that I experienced was harbored deep in the soul as I began to fully realize how much God in Christ was willing to sacrifice so that I could be free from the penalty of sin. Jesus paid that price once and for all – and I accepted his forgiveness with my entire being. The dark night of the soul that had been nipping at my heels for far too long was now over. Thankfulness blossomed in me like the burst of sunshine at dawn.

It is not my intent to portray myself as some sort of super holy person. I am not that at all. In fact, I am flawed, walking with feet of clay. Knowing my personal weakness could be quite damaging to my state of being were it not for the fact that God's promises are not contingent upon how successful I am in my walk with Jesus. It is my desire to live for him in all that I say and do, despite the many times when I fall woefully short. He has declared me to be his child; to be an heir of God's kingdom; and to have an address in heaven waiting for me.

This may sound to some like so much "pie in the sky," but I assure you, based again on God's Word, that such a reality for those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior is a promise which God says is true.

Here's what always gets to me and why I am thankful in all things. If God is in fact God of the universe and everything that exists, then his power is beyond incredible. It could only be described as being beyond our finite understanding of what we know about this time-and-space stage we live upon for such an oh-so-brief moment in eternity.

So, I boil this down to my life and what takes place each and every day. As both good and bad come my way I can easily find myself worked up over bad situations and equally bad people, seething over circumstances and problems I have no control over. Truth be told, it's better that I would not have control over such circumstances for fear I would choose to handle them in a way that might make things even worse. You see, if God is as big as I believe he is, and as powerful as I've mentioned earlier, then it only makes sense that he can take care

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of any trouble in my life. If I don't believe this about God, then I have, in essence, shrunk God down to the size of a lesser god, or a superman, if you will. Such a personage can still do many great things, appearing to be the answer to our problems, but they yet lack the mantle of God who is All-knowing, All-powerful, and Everywhere at once.

It is in these same scriptures that we are told to, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and don't lean on your own understanding.*" I may think I'm really smart, and according to the way the world measures being smart, I guess I would be considered pretty smart. With a bachelor's, a master's, and a doctorate degree most folks assume I'm smart. But, compared to what? In my 68 years, I have spent well over twenty years earning an education. The education I have received is no small matter, and I am very thankful for the privilege. But even the Bible warns against too much education: "*Much study wearies the body.*" How true this is! But the greater concern is to not be caught up in our own academic achievements. We are not to think more highly of ourselves than we should. When it comes to my need to trust God, I am cautioned not to rely on my own understanding. Why? Because I may well have the wrong picture of who God really is. I certainly had a distorted view of God growing up. Had it not been for his mercy, I would have continued on through life believing God to be something other than, and therefore lesser than, who he actually is.

So, this Thursday I will gather with family and friends around the table, thankful to God for the multitude of blessings I have received from his gracious hand. But, if I lost it all on Friday, I would still praise him with a thankful heart for one simple reason: He alone is God, and he will always do what is right. I may not think so at the time. But my view of things is skewed, whereas God's view is perfect. But even as Job suffered much, he spoke these words: "*Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him.*"

God may yet lead me into situations I do not understand, but with my trust fully in him, I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. Regardless of what happens, I will either still be here on earth, or I will be in heaven. And, it's God's decision where and when my time on earth ends, and my new residence in Glory begins!

I am always thankful every day for God's promises.

Happy Thanksgiving!