



September 27, 2020 - Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 5:18-21

OPEN

How do we know it is fall? Is it because earlier this week the autumnal equinox occurred? Or is it because one can now purchase “Pumpkin Spice Kraft Dinner”!?

Beyond all the superficial stuff of the thanksgiving season, we are looking for **solid proof** that the follower of Jesus is truly thankful. There is a lot of material in Paul’s epistles that is either about his own gratitude to God or is an encouragement to other followers of Jesus to be thankful.

Paul’s teaching on thanksgiving can be arranged according to seven themes. Last week our focus was joy. Today we examine the evidence of submission.

DIG

There are two passages from Paul’s letters that encourage submission. And in turn, when Christians live in submission to God, it reveals a thankful heart. Paul gives the following two commands.

ONE: Watch your posture - Romans 12:1-2

How is your posture? Physical posture is the position in which we hold our body, when sitting or standing. What about our spiritual posture? How do we hold our hearts before God? This passage tells us to have a posture of **submission**.

Paul’s choice of words is important. He urged – which means “beseech” or even “admonish” – the Romans to offer themselves to God as a living sacrifice. This could also be translated “offering” and perhaps Paul even had the Old Testament thank offering in mind. Notice something important from the phrase “by the mercies of God” (ESV). It is the due to the grace and goodness of God that we have the power and privilege by which we can offer our lives to Him.

Further, Paul identified the offering of our lives as a reasonable or logical service. It is, in fact, an act of worship to God. William Temple described worship in this way...

To quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open up the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.
(Listening to the Giants, Warren W. Wiersbe, Baker, 1980, 19)

This last phrase is about the posture of our lives. Have we offered our life in adoring submission to God? When we submit our will to God, we will make great progress in gratefulness. Submission to God is a powerful evidence that a believer is thankful. Listen to these words by Grace Marestaing,

We seem to understand celebrity much better than royalty. The recognition of celebrity is an almost passive activity. The spectator needs not be involved to enjoy some of the passing entertainment benefits. Royalty, on the other hand, demands recognition of power and destiny and the submission of involvement. Royalty is what the majesty of Christ is about. This is why we respond to the call “crown Him with many crowns.” We crown Him in recognition of who He is... “the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15). In recognition we submit to the Lord of love...the Lord of life...the Lord of heaven...the Lord of time...Recognition of royalty asks for our involvement in worship.

Romans 12:2 explains an amazing possibility for the person who submits to God. By His grace and power the believer can resist being molded or shaped by the world’s pattern. Instead, God will bring life transformation and mind renewal. And when this occurs, the godness of God’s will be proved.

Andrew Murray acknowledged the fear one might have about submitting to God’s will. He suggested,

Just look again at how beautiful the will of God makes everything in nature. Ask yourself, now that He loves and blesses you as a child, if it is right to distrust him. The will of God is the will of His love.
How can you fear to surrender yourself to it?
(Like Christ, Whitaker House, 1981, 88)

TWO: Watch your practice - Ephesians 5:18-21

In addition to our posture, submission relates to our day-to-day practice. In the preceding verses life in the dark and the light is contrasted (v. 8) with a call to discover “what pleases the Lord” (v. 10).

This focus on God's will is echoed again, "do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is" (v. 17). So, what is required to live out God's will in our practice...that will bring about our growth in gratitude? First, there must be a rejection and then come the desired results.

When Paul referred to "wine" he used what we call synecdoche – using a part for the whole. For example, when we ask someone if they "have wheels" we mean "do you have a car".

Being drunk is very clearly an inappropriate submission of one's life to the control of a substance. The phrase "which leads to debauchery" ("excess, squander") is an expansion of this thought. In Paul's day the Greeks believed that Dionysus (Roman, Bacchus) was the god of wine, grape cultivation, fertility, ritual madness, theater, and religious ecstasy. There were pagan worship festivals which involved drunkenness and worse. So, this is much more than a caution about alcohol itself. Paul was urging all Christians to reject anyone or anything which demands control of our lives and subverts our submission to God.

In contrast to such control, Christians must be filled by the Holy Spirit. This is a daily, ongoing practice of submitting to God. And it yields wonderful results. Note that in the NIV there is a break between verse 20 and 21...but that is not the case in the original text. When we are filled by the Spirit we can expect...

- a. *Sincere joy from the heart which brings blessing to others - v. 19*
- b. *Constant gratitude to God which encompasses all of life - v. 20*
- c. *Practical harmony with believers which honors Jesus - v. 21*

REFLECT

God invites every believer into a life-long worship relationship with Himself. In Romans 12:1 (MESSAGE) we read, "*God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life -your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life - and place it before God as an offering [of worship]*".

Whenever we celebrate communion we should think of it as a thanksgiving celebration. The Greek word for "be thankful" has been transliterated as "Eucharist." A number of church traditions actually use "Eucharist" as the name for their celebration of the Lord's Table.

Are you submitted to God? Are you allowing anything other than the Almighty to rule in your life? If you are, now is the time to repent, confess, and know the cleansing power of the blood of Christ.

- **Some Scriptures**

Here are some passages to read and consider carefully.

God frees us from all that hinders our submission to Him - Romans 8:1-4

God is fully worthy of our adoration and submission - Romans 11:33-36

God makes it possible to experience mutual submission - Romans 15:5-6,13

- **Some Songs**

Just as we are commanded in Ephesians 5:19, take some time to listen, sing along, and then share with someone the encouragement found in these Scriptural songs.

Psalm 121 – Brian Doerksen

The Lord Is My Shepherd – Paul Wilbur

Deliver Us – Selah

Psalm 130 – Keith & Kristyn Getty