

Be Thankful!

In the midst of our hardships, we can rejoice over the things that are not wrong in our lives.

“Thank [God] in everything [no matter what the circumstances may be, be thankful and give thanks], for this is the will of God for you [who are] in Christ Jesus [the Revealer and Mediator of that will]” (1 Thess. 5:18, The Amplified Bible).

When our minds flow with thanksgiving and praise, we develop immunity to the enemy’s infectious ways. But the more we complain, the more defeated we feel.

A wise pastor once told me: “Praise fills the heavens and the earth with God’s presence and drives away the darkness. So if you want to live in the sunshine, praise the Lord.”

When good things happen to us, we turn to praise. It’s easy to lift our hands and our voices when God answers prayer and delivers us from problems. It isn’t always easy when things go wrong. What do we do when we’re sick, when we lose our jobs, or when people talk against us? How do we fill our minds with joyful thanksgiving in those situations?

If we read the verse above and add to it Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord always [delight, gladden yourselves in Him]; again I say, Rejoice!” then we see that we have options.

The negative option is the attitude of Job’s wife, who was so distraught at the loss of her children and possessions that she cried out to Job: “Do you still hold fast your blameless uprightness? Renounce God and die!” (Job 2:9).

Job answered with great wisdom: “You speak as one of the impious and foolish women would speak. What? Shall we accept [only] good at the hand of God and shall we not accept [also] misfortune and what is of a bad nature?” (v. 10). Job understood that a righteous life doesn’t mean everything runs smoothly and that only blessings fall on top of blessings.

We have two positive options available to us in this new year, and most of us can practice the first, but not all of us can accept the second. The first is to praise God in spite of what’s going on in our lives. Or another way to say that is, in the midst of our troubles and hardships we can rejoice over the things that are not wrong in our lives.

It may take effort, but if we can turn our eyes way from the immediate problems, we can see that not everything in life is bad. We also can rejoice because God has faithfully taken us through the turmoil of the past, and we can rejoice and know He will do the same thing again.

The second option is to ask: “God, what can I learn from this? What do You want to teach me through this so that I may be closer to You and rejoice more fully in your goodness?” Those are not easy questions, and the answers are often hard.

Sometimes we grasp the important lessons in our lives only when we encounter difficulty. The psalmist says, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now Your word do I keep [hearing, receiving, loving, and obeying it]” (Ps. 119:67). God loves us enough to give us the opportunity to change our ways and to follow Him.

Through the years, I’ve heard many stories from people who had

wonderful jobs or great ministries or made a great deal of money—and then their lives fell apart. One man—someone who had once been a millionaire—came to our meetings after he had spent three years in prison.

The first words that came out of his mouth were: “I’m glad I was convicted and sent to prison. I had run from God for a long time. The Lord finally got my attention when someone gave me a copy of your book *Healing the Brokenhearted*.”

Not everyone can rejoice and give thanks for their suffering, but we all can give thanks in the midst of it. Let’s pray this prayer together and start this new year right:

“God, I’m thankful for Your love and Your presence. Forgive me for grumbling when things go wrong, and remind me of how many things go right in my life. Enable me to rejoice in You always. Amen.”

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