Giving Thanks

1. God allows things in our lives to help us grow to become more like Jesus.
   A. Christlikeness is the goal—the primary purpose and focus of our lives.
   B. It's the process of sanctification, of being set apart or made holy.

Romans 8:28-29 "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters;"

   C. God uses hardship to make us more like Him. Because he uses hardship we can be filled with gratitude even in difficulties we can't understand.

2. Because of what Jesus has done, we have been forgiven.
   A. We are adopted into God's family.
   B. We have received eternal life (Eph. 1:13-14)
   C. We have the gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. (Jn. 14:16-17)
   D. We are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. (Romans 8:17)

3. We have a choice in life.
   A. There will always be those things that we can complain about, but there is always much to be thankful for.

   B. How grateful we are is the key to understanding what we really believe about God, about ourselves, and the world.

   C. Between gratefulness to God and indifference toward him lies the distinction between wisdom and folly.

4. "Thankfulness is not just a religious duty, or a task on a list, or something nice people do, or a simple protocol of good manners to be taught to children.

   A. Rather, thankfulness is a powerful force. It is pivotal. It wins or loses the war for your future. When practiced, it works toward beauty and produces fruit. When ignored, it works toward ugliness and chokes out life. At stake is the vitality of every human relationship, without exception."

   B. We are always moving ultimately toward unspeakable joy or excruciating regret. These are the ultimate consequences of gratitude or ingratitude.

   C. Some doubt God's goodness and therefore seldom feel grateful. Some believe God is good and are always looking for ways to faithfully express their appreciation for that goodness. They are hopeful. (Crabtree)

D. Giving thanks (gratitude) is not a religious "work" that piles up merit in our account. Gratitude springs from faith, and faith is a gift" (Eph. 2:8-9). Hope grows in the soil of gratitude. Our hearts gratefully recognize him as the source of it all.

E. Giving thanks to God keeps our hearts in right relationship with Him and saves us from a host of harmful emotions and attitudes that will rob us of the peace God wants us to experience. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Sam Crabtree writes, "I don't speak of collapsed bridges lightly. From my kitchen window I can see a ten-lane interstate highway bridge that crosses the Mississippi River. It replaces a bridge in that same location that collapsed in 2007, killing thirteen and injuring 145 others, many seriously. Are we to give thanks for that?"

"Gratitude requires faith in the sovereign God who is always working—who isn't done working all things together for good. Even the things that grieve God, that threaten to crush us, things that elicit God's compassion and comfort for his people—those things are not accidents or flaws in the plan. Everything that happens in our lives, God is somehow working for good."

"Paul Eckstadt, a fifty one year old trucker, was on that bridge when it collapsed and killed him. Was that the end of his life? Yes, but only in a narrow sense. In another sense, that death was not the end of his life. On the banks above the river where his truck fell amid the rubble is a memorial with these words."

I was a traveler
Across the country wide.
I heard the mountain's testimony
And saw the skies declare His glory.

Along the highways I traveled
Till concrete and steel collapsed.
Though crushed and buried
I am still alive!

As man's work failed me
My Savior stood by me.
Consider the work of Jesus Christ
For his love endures forever.
God is not done. He never is.

God is never done!