

Painful Thankful

Thankfulness is the feeling or expression of gratitude for something done for us. We know this well. But what can be more challenging is the mindset of being thankful in all circumstances. *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, **give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)***. It seems the default human process we can employ is to look over our immediate circumstances and if there is more good than bad, we are thankful for that good. However, being thankful in all circumstances challenges us to think a little deeper and more specifically about how God is working for our good (Rom 8:28) even in painful circumstances.

Let me illustrate this idea with a story of how I got to work through this earlier this year.

It was the Saturday after Easter, and I was getting ready for worship team rehearsal by removing the extra half choir risers from the stage. All was going great until I was removing the articulating legs from the bottom of the platform. I was balancing the platform with my left hand and pulling out the leg assembly with my right hand. This worked great for the first platform, but when I went to remove the legs from the second platform, I didn't realize the articulation was now on the opposite side. So, when I pulled the legs off with my right hand, the articulation quickly swung down, and **I heard a little crunch accompanied with significant pain**. I was quite confused until I saw my right index finger caught in the joint of the articulation and quickly understood the source of the pain.

So, what might thankfulness look like in this situation?

If I weighed everything in the moment, **I would have personally been very thankful if my finger had been one inch to the right** and not broken for sure. However, God's working was a little more subtle than my immediate preference. First off, I was thankful in a small way that the issue was with my right hand because it is far easier to strum with three fingers rather than play chords with three fingers. But I was frustrated that **I would not be able to strum as well**, or use any finger picking techniques, or play without pain. However, this gave me the opportunity to remember the secondary nature of these things. You see, corporate worship is not about any specific musical performance. It's about the people of God joining their voices together to proclaim His worth. So, while we certainly try to make beautiful music to reflect the truth of the lyrics, **the primary musical beauty comes from the voices of the congregation joined together**. This is a critical truth for me to remember each week as I lead. While I mentally know it well, I now had a practical reminder of that truth. While my finger was unpleasant for a few weeks, it was truly **a blessed reminder of that greater truth God worked in my life for which I am thankful**.

Similarly, my encouragement for you all is to consider how God is working for your good even in the painful things such that you can specifically give Him thanks. But know that even if we don't see the specifics of His working right away, we can always look to Christ as our living hope and thank Him for the certain future He gives us past all the pain of life.

Jacob