Preparing a Heart of Thanksgiving
A 7-Day Devotional

Day 1- The Heart Must Be Prepared

Verse: 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-17

Devotional: When you sat down to read this devotional today, did you bring a thanksgiving heart with you - or did you leave it at home next to the worries, the gotta haves and on the kitchen table?"
Thanksgiving is coming. The calendar says it. The stores have been saying it since September. But the Word of God says something deeper than the calendar and store ever could.

Thanksgiving is not a date on a page. Thanksgiving is a condition of the heart.
And hearts do not prepare themselves. A farmer does not walk out in November and find a harvest waiting that he never planted in the spring.

Whatever seed you have been sowing with your mouth, your thoughts, and your focus all year long - that is the harvest standing in your field right now.

So the question before us is not, "Will you celebrate Thanksgiving?" Most of us will. The question is, "Have you prepared the heart for it?"

Our text is short, but it is a trumpet blast!. Paul writes to the church in Thessalonica: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

Three commands, three verses, one impossible assignment apart from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is exactly why it is possible to pray without ceasing and to give thanks in all circumstances.

Write out 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: _____
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Go back and highlight what words stand out to you today.

Why is this verse only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit? Journal it out:_____
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Ask the Holy Spirit to empower you today to be thankful, no matter what comes your way: _____
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Day 2- Thanksgiving Does Not Wait For Good Circumstances

Read Acts Chapter 17.

Devotional: To feel the weight of 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, you have to know where they were written. Paul planted this church in Acts 17, and it was a tough build and rough delivery. He came to Thessalonica bruised from a beating in Philippi - his back still torn, his ankles bruised and swelled and feet still sore from the stocks.

He preached three Sabbaths in the synagogue, and when the Gentiles came flooding into the kingdom, a mob formed. They dragged a man named Jason before the city officials and shouted that these men had turned the world upside down(Acts 17:6). Paul had to slip out of town by night to keep the new believers from being destroyed.

And who were these believers? They were first-century Gentiles who had grown up burning incense to idols, bowing to Caesar as lord, living with no covenant, no promise, no hope. Paul describes it himself in chapter 1:9 they "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." And what did they get for it? Persecution.

Paul writes in chapter 3 that he sent Timothy back to them because he feared their faith was being shaken by affliction. Timothy came back with good news, they were standing! And it was from that joy that Paul wrote this letter.

Now read 1 Thessalonians 5:16 - 18 again with that in your mind. He is not writing this to comfortable people on a hillside in springtime. He is writing it to brand-new believers who lost jobs, family, and reputation when they named the name Yeshua. If thanksgiving depended on circumstances, this letter could never have been written. But Paul is not teaching them to thank God for every circumstance. Look carefully - he says give thanks in all circumstances.

There is a difference. You do not thank God for the cancer. You thank God in the cancer, because He is still on the throne, He is still your Shepherd, His love has not changed, and your name is still written in heaven.

Gratitude that waits for everything to go right is not gratitude at all - it is just happiness, and happiness runs out the moment the storm rolls in.Notice also that Paul does not call this good advice. He calls it the will of God "in Christ Jesus for you." Church, have you ever begged God to show you His will for your life, wondering if it was hidden somewhere up high? Here it is, hanging at eye level.

It is God's will that you be a rejoicing, praying, thanking person. That means when you give thanks in the middle of a hard season, you are not just being polite, you are stepping directly

into the center of God's will. The devil would love for you to believe that gratitude is optional seasoning on the Christian life, like turkey dressing.
No, beloved. It is the will of God for you. It is not what you do when you feel like it; it is who you are becoming in Messiah.

Heart check: Where are you today with your thankfulness? What are some things in your life right now that have been difficult to find gratefulness in? Journal it out: _____
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Now ask yourself, “How can I give thanks, even in this hard time?” Remember, you may not be grateful for the circumstance but how can you ge grateful IN the circumstance? Tell God about it:_____
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Day 3- The Offering of Thanksgiving Is For Today.

Read: Leviticus 7:12-15 and Psalm 50:14-15

Devotional: In the Old Testament, thanksgiving was not a feeling - it was an offering. Leviticus 7:12 describes the thank offering, the todah, a peace offering brought to the tabernacle when God had delivered you, rescued you, or answered you.

Psalm 50:14-15 captures it: "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving." And here is the detail that will preach: the bread of the thank offering had to be eaten on the day it was offered.(Lev7:15). It could not be saved for tomorrow.

The rabbis read that and taught that a deliverance from God must be celebrated now! Gratitude has a shelf life.

If you do not give thanks today for what God did today, tomorrow the miracle becomes ordinary, and the day after, it becomes memory, and soon it becomes something that doesn't move your soul, it sadly becomes nothing.

How many of us are living on stale bread? God delivered you years ago, answered you years ago, and you have never once turned around to say thank You - you keep meaning to, next thanksgiving, someday. The Word says today. Today is the day of the offering.

Write our Psalm 50:14-15:_____
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Now go back and highlight what the Holy Spirit is laying on your heart today. What is standing out to you today?

Think back on your life. How has God delivered you from time of trouble? Journal it out:
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What has God done for you today?:

Now pray to God and thank him for it- all of it:

Day 4 - Ten Were Healed But One Returned, and One Was Made Well

Read Luke 17.

Devotional: Understand what leprosy meant in the first century. It was not merely a disease; it was a sentence. The leper was to tear his clothes, let his hair hang loose, cover his upper lip, and cry "Unclean! Unclean!" to anyone who came near.
He lived outside the camp, cut off from his wife, his children, his work, the synagogue, the temple, the presence of God as Israel knew it. Ten men. Ten walking death sentences. Ten lives on hold.
They stand at a distance, as the law required, and they lift their voices: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."(vs 13). And Jesus does not touch them. He does not pronounce them clean on the spot. He gives them a command that tests their faith before it tests anything else: "Go and show yourselves to the priests"(v14).
The priest could only certify a healing that had already happened. So these ten men had to walk away still leprous, obeying a word about a healing they could not yet see.
Luke says, "as they went they were cleansed."(v14). Somewhere on that road, mid-step, mid-obedience, the scabs fell off, the feeling came back into dead fingers, and the flaky skin became like a newborn's covering them…. Hallelujah! Sometimes your healing is in your going, not in your standing!

Go back and read verses 15-16.

Who came back? One. Out of ten. One man saw his miracle and understood that the miracle was pointing at Someone. And Luke adds the detail you would never expect: he was a Samaritan. The foreigner. The half-breed, as first-century Jews would have said of him.
The one with the least religious upbringing is the only one who came back - because gratitude does not grow in the soil of privilege; it grows in the soil of a heart that knows it deserved nothing and received everything.

And Jesus asks, “Where the nine?” Nine out of ten took the blessing and ran. Nine out of ten got their lives back and never connected the gift to the Giver.

Read Romans 1:21

The first step in humanity's fall was not rebellion - it was a failure of thanksgiving. You can be in the presence of Jesus, healed by His power, sent on the mission of the Kingdom, and still miss Jesus - if you never turn around.
Write out what Jesus tells the returned in Luke 17:19: _____
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Now that word is deeper than it looks.
All ten were cleansed - the Greek word is about healing(iaomai ee-ah'-om-ahee). But the one who returned was made well (sōzō sode'-zo) - a different word, the word for salvation, wholeness, being saved, delivered and healed.

Nine got healed skin. One got a whole life. Nine got their bodies back. One fell at the feet of the Savior.

This is why we prepare our hearts: because there is a healing you can receive and a salvation you can miss. There is a provision you can enjoy and a Presence you can neglect. The nine received what God's hands gave. The one received what God's heart gave.

Which one do you want to be this season? Then do what he did. Turn around. Come back to the feet of Jesus with a loud voice, and give Him thanks before the crowd, before your family, before heaven and hell, that the Son of God had mercy on you.

What thankfulness do you have to bring to the feet of Jesus today? _____
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Thankfulness is more than speech. As we saw the one retuned to him. He took that action to come back and show Jesus that he was thankful. What actions can you take to show that thankfulness and live it out? _____
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Day 5 - A Thankful Heart Is Cultivated, Not Spontaneous

Read: Deuteronomy 8:10-14 and Psalm 103:2

Guided Devotional: Many think after reading Luke 17 “That Samaritan felt it in the moment. I don't feel thankful." Right. And nobody feels like a fruitful orchard either - but orchards are not felt into existence; they are cultivated.
The Samaritan's thanksgiving looked spontaneous, but we have to look at the sequence Luke gives us: "when he saw that he was healed."(v15) Seeing came before praising. He stopped. He looked at what God had done. He considered it. Thanksgiving begins with attention.
An unprepared heart is almost always an unexamined heart - one that has rushed past a hundred mercies without ever stopping to look at them.
That is why David commands himself in Psalm 103: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Forget not!

Write out Psalm 103:2 _____
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David is preaching to his own heart, because the human heart leaks. We have a covenant command to remember, because God knows that gratitude does not survive on autopilot. Moses warned Israel about this when they were about to enter the land of abundance - he said, take care, when you eat and are full, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you out of Egypt. (Deut 8:10-14).

Prosperity is more dangerous to gratitude than persecution ever was.
The nine lepers were not robbed of their thanksgiving by their suffering; they were robbed by their sudden wellness. Don't let your answered prayers become your amnesia.
So how do we cultivate this heart? I'll give you three practices from the Word, plain and powerful.

First, remember on purpose. Not vague blessings. Specific ones. The job. The bedside healing. The night the rent was covered. The time He pulled you out of the pit. Write them down. Say them out loud. Memory is the raw material of praise.

Do what David did. Look back on Psalm 103:2 and name your benefits. Be specific:
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Second, offer the sacrifice.

Read Hebrews 3:15. Define "sacrifice":_____
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When your circumstances are smiling, praise flows free like a river. But when the year has been brutal - when the chair at the table is empty this Thanksgiving, when the diagnosis came back, when the money did not stretch - then praise becomes an offering laid on the altar with trembling hands.

Heaven does not value the offering less because it was hard. Jonah, from the belly of the fish, in the dark, in the seaweed, said, "But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you." If Jonah could thank God in the belly, you can thank God in your belly of trouble.

That is not denial, that is defiance against the darkness. That is what it means to rejoice in the circumstances rather than because of them.

Third, be filled.

Read Ephesians 5:18-20

Do you see it? Thanksgiving in Scripture is not a solo performance of willpower - it is the overflow of a Spirit-filled life. You cannot squeeze fruit out of a dead branch, and you cannot squeeze thanksgiving out of a dry heart.

Read Colossians 3:16

Let the oil and wine of the Holy Spirit fill you - let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs - and gratitude stops being something you manufacture and becomes something that leaks out of you.

You will find yourself thanking God in the car, in the kitchen, in the waiting room. That is not you being strong. That is the Spirit of God making melody in a heart He has prepared.

Pour out your thanksgiving to Him today in prayer:_____
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Day 6 - Thanksgiving is the First Fruit

Read Psalm 100:4 and Luke 22:17

Devotional: In the law of the first fruits, Israel did not bring God the harvest at the end of the season. They brought Him the first sheaf - the first piece of the crop, offered while most of the field was still standing green and unripe.

It was an act of faith that said,"All of this belongs to You, and I trust You for the rest."
That is what your thanksgiving is, beloved. When you give thanks now, before the harvest is in, while your circumstances are still green and unfinished and uncertain, you're offering God the first fruit of your year, your family, your future.

You are declaring over everything still standing in your field: this belongs to Him too. Psa 100:4 says, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!"

Thanksgiving is not the dessert after the meal of worship. Thanksgiving is the gate. It is how you get in. And when you walk through that gate, you position your whole heart for what God wants to do next.

Think of Yeshua Himself, on the night He was betrayed. Lk 22:17 tells us He took the bread, "and when he had given thanks, he broke it." Given thanks!

The cross was hours away, Gethsemane was minutes away, betrayal was at the door - and the Son of God gave thanks over bread that would be broken, because He saw beyond the breaking to the resurrection and the redemption of the world.

If Jesus could give thanks at the edge of Calvary, then the Spirit of Jesus in you can give thanks at the edge of whatever you are facing.

And here is the promise that rises out of that: the same way His broken bread became salvation for the world, your offered thanksgiving becomes a doorway for God's next move in your life. You thank Him in the dark, and you position yourself for the morning.

Why is thanksgiving the gateway into God's Presence? How would an ungrateful heart hinder our walk with Him? Journal it out:_____
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In what ways have you been trying to come to the Throne Room with an ungrateful heart and expecting to be let in? How has that hindered your own walk with Him?: _____

Repent and pour out your thanksgiving and praise for your God who saved you from the pit of darkness and brought you into His Glorious Light!: _____

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Day 7 - The Offering Is Today

Guided Devotional: A prepared heart for thanksgiving is a heart that has learned to thank God in the circumstances and not just for them; a heart that has turned back to the feet of Jesus instead of running off with the blessing; a heart that remembers on purpose, offers the sacrifice even when it costs, and stays filled with the Spirit so praise flows instead of being pumped. That heart is not built on Thanksgiving morning in forty-five minutes. It is built today, and the day after today, one act of obedience at a time.

And here is the urgency. Remember the bread of the thanks offering had to be eaten the same day. Today. The deliverances God has worked in your life this year, the answered prayers, the provision, the mercy that met you every single morning, they are fresh bread on the altar today, and today is the day of the offering.

Name one specific thing God did this year and thank Him for it. Write it first then thank him outloud: _____

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Now ask the Spirit to fill you fresh: _____

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Bring the offering. Prepare the heart. And let thanksgiving rise in this place - not because the calendar says so, but because the will of God says so, in Christ Jesus, for you.

How will you carry this newfound thanksgiving with you even after the Thanksgiving Season comes to pass? _____

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