

# WHAT WE CANNOT LOSE

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When we tell God how thankful we are, it's common to emphasize the good things we have and the qualities of life that we enjoy, perhaps because those are so easily lost.

Good health is a great blessing, but it could be gone tomorrow. Into the most loving families and friendships, death intrudes, sometimes when we least expect it. Our tables may be loaded with food today, but we could be out of work tomorrow and wondering about our next meal.

Yet the Scriptures command us to *"give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Ephesians 5:20). We are urged, *"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6-7). And we are instructed: *"Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus"* (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Why is it so hard to thank God for everything (and everyone) in our lives, and to be grateful in all circumstances? Why do we suffer so much fear and frustration, so much anxiety and bitterness? Why does life seem so unfair to us, and people so annoying?

Maybe we need a new approach to giving thanks. Instead of focusing on what we have—whether family, friends, or food—perhaps we should thank God instead for *what we cannot lose*.

Think about this: focusing on *what we have* often highlights what seems to be *missing* from our lives, and leads us to compare ourselves poorly with others. Someone else always seems to have more or better. Inside, if not aloud, we end up crying out, "Why, God? What's the matter with me? This is not what I signed up for!"

We experience *anything but* the peace of God; it is our lack, our loss, and our discontent, instead, that "exceeds anything we can understand."

What is God doing?!?!

Through His Word, by His Spirit, in all the circumstances of life, God is chiseling away everything in us that is not like Him—selfish habits, hidden sins, character weaknesses—so that our character and our conduct will reveal His Son to others.

Paul the Apostle lived through the same process of adjustment—chiseling—and had similar struggles along the way. He saw himself as the “chief of sinners,” yet he also knew that he was an apostle of Christ, commissioned to carry the Gospel to those who had not yet believed.

Romans 7 speaks of some of his struggle with these words: *“I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway”* (Romans 7:18-19). *“Oh, what a miserable person I am!”* (Romans 7:24). *“In my mind I really want to obey God’s law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin”* (Romans 7:25).

But Paul found his answer in Jesus Christ. He said, *“Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 7:25). The answer for you, too, is in Jesus Christ the Lord. As I speak to you today, you may sense an internal affirmation—a sense of the rightness of what I describe, a hope in the One of whom I am speaking. That is faith rising up to take hold of God’s words. Let it rise! Follow it to Jesus.

Romans 8 reveals the conclusions from Paul’s quest. I want to highlight seven of them.

*“So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1). Oh, people will condemn you—people who don’t know or don’t follow the truth, as it is in Christ Jesus—just as you have condemned yourself, but God does not condemn you. And the accusations and condemnations of other people cannot move God from His loving commitment to you.

*“So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace”* (Romans 8:6-7). Once you give your life to Jesus Christ, your mind begins to be renewed. By His words and by His Spirit, Christ molds new ideas, new thought processes, and new rationale—shifting you more and more toward God’s point of view and His wisdom.

*“So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, ‘Abba, Father’”* (Romans 8:15). Fears that drive you like a slave are not from God; cast them aside immediately and persistently. You are not a slave but a dearly loved child of God, if you belong to Jesus Christ. He is your loving Papa and your Friend.

*“We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us”* (Romans 8:23). We can read of our full inheritance in the Bible, we just cannot possess it all yet. So God has given us the gift of hope—a hope that will not be disappointed. Don’t expect it all here and now—this, by the way, is the source of much frustration and anxiety—for God has made us for a time and place that are far superior, for which we must wait with patient confidence. He will not fail us.

*“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them”* (Romans 8:28). Here is the amazing power of God’s providence. Nothing is wasted. Nothing is lost. *Everything* is bent by His mighty hand to contribute to His good purpose for our lives.

*“What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?”* (Romans 8:31). You are guarded by the One who *“never slumbers nor sleeps”* (Psalm 121:4). You are shielded by the Impenetrable Shield. God is for you, not against you, and therefore, *“no weapon turned against you will succeed”* (Isaiah 54:17). Your Shepherd is the conquering King of kings and Lord of lords.

Romans 8:35-39 is the seventh conclusion that Paul draws, and his grand crescendo. After considering the common difficulties and calamities that can strip away the external comforts from our lives—all the painful frustrations of human sin, weakness, and mortality—Paul concluded that none of them *“shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Here is what he wrote (Romans 8:35-39):

*“Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, ‘For your sake we are killed every day; we are considered sheep for the slaughter.’) No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

*And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

The sum is this: God’s love is unailing, unceasing, unchanging, and unconquerable.

Though your circumstances today or tomorrow may be difficult or unpleasant, if you have turned your life over to Jesus Christ, there is no person or problem that can drive a wedge between you and Christ’s love for you.

No one. Nothing. Never.

Do you belong to Jesus Christ today?

Are you following Jesus Christ today?

Are you trusting Jesus Christ today?

Are you thanking Jesus Christ today for His love that you cannot lose?