

The crucial question is this: Is it God's will or is it our will which we are to seek to obey? If it is our will, then we shall give thanks only when we have what we want. If it is God's will then we shall give thanks for everything. Instead of praying for fine weather when it is wet, or for wet weather when it is fine, it would often be better to pray for grace to take the weather as God gives it. Instead of praying for riches when we are poor or for health when we are in sickness, it would be often better to pray that we may learn the merciful lessons which poverty and affliction are intended to teach us. I do not say that we are wrong when in trying circumstances we pray for escape from them. There is no sanctifying force in mere discomfort, and it is natural enough that we seek to be rid of it. But we have never any right to make unconditional demands upon God. "Not my will but thine be done" is the essence of all true petition. It might chance that if our prayer was answered, we should be infinite losers. We are so apt to mistake the best possessions of life. For example, we think we cannot live without health. You often hear men say: "Health is the greatest blessing in the world." Now, that it is a great blessing no one will deny. But if it is the greatest blessing, what of those consigned to life-long weakness, moaning out the long days in the hospitals or in the sick chambers? Are they cursed because they are not strong? Go to them and ask. Their pale faces light up with joy as they tell you how good God is to them, and if you say, "Why, I thought there was no blessing in the world like health," they will smile sadly at your childish unbelief. O brothers, let us be thankful that the best possessions of life are not upon the surface. It is a good thing to be well and strong, but I had rather be Job, stung with a loathsome malady, yet singing his psalm of praise, than the gilded voluptuary who revels in his animal spirits, but who is himself an animal delighting to wallow in the mire. It is a good thing to have enough and to spare of this world's riches; but I cannot envy Dives his splendid purple and his luxurious fare when I see poor despised Lazarus, who had once been grateful for the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. When the end comes it will matter little what we have. It will matter greatly what we are.

I hope we begin to see that there is nothing unreasonable in St. Paul's injunction: "In everything give thanks." I need not remind you how hard it seems in the hour of disappointment or