

God does not forget covenants. Covenants with God mark the founding of this country. This country is exceptional because...

1) it was founded on Judeo-Christian principles, not only the ten commandments but the history of God's intervention and hand of blessing on Israel guided the founding.

2) Capitalism and the freedom to take risks is a result of democracy and freedom - both found in the promises of Jesus. **John 8:36** *So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.* The Lord is no respecter of people and gives freedom to all.

3) It is still welcoming and open to whosoever will may come. The US is the country that people give up all to come to. They give up homes, families, careers, languages, and culture - forsaking all to become a part of this great melting pot.

The words of John Winthrop as he gathered the Puritans in Plymouth... "For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world."

This covenant provided a pathway to prosperity, safety, and order these past 400 years and now we are experiencing the discipline, correction, and consequences of the breaking and forsaking of that covenant - because God loves us. In America today, we are living in the mess of the broken covenant.

So, the question we have to ask and answer... What is the church to do? It must be Biblical but certainly not shouting vulgarities at politicians, not shouting at God for a King of our choosing, not alienating and shrugging our responsibilities as citizens of the Great Experiment that is the United States. The answer must...

- be rooted and grounded in the Word of God.
- be attainable, practical, and divinely powerful for every citizen of the Kingdom.
- separate the people of God from the world system and those locked in it.

But here are some Biblical answers to what the church is to do: **I Thessalonians 5:16-18** *Always rejoice, constantly pray, in everything give thanks. For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* God's will does not change. **I Thessalonians 2:18** *For we wanted to come to you (I, Paul, in fact, tried again and again) but Satan thwarted us.* Paul gives the basis for living in a world of uncertainty.

Every generation since the resurrection has had some of the signs of the last days. But we in our day are experiencing every sign. It is imperative that we understand what the will of God is for His church, His bride, then we will rule with Him in glory.

### **I Thessalonians 5:16-18**

- *Rejoice Always...* because the Lord is coming back. With all kinds of issues we don't want to rejoice. Thessalonica was in persecution and yet Paul says "Rejoice." We can know the end of the story and we win. So we need to turn our attention to the things of the Lord or we will be see everything breaking down around us. The Lord is coming back and we are headed to eternity with God. We need to know the whole story and what remains to be done.

- *Pray without ceasing.* Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, therefore He is a breath away at all times. We can have a vibrant relationship of talking to God, of asking at any moment for needs and praying for others' needs. Have we lost sight of the goals of a Spirit-filled life which are the redemption of the lost, sanctification of the saints, and the revealing of the Spirit-filled church to a world desperate for God? To pray without ceasing means the Holy Spirit inside of us wants to use us. Constant awareness means constant communication; constant communication will prepare us to be used by Him.
- *In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* This world is increasingly thankless, which means that our world, the church, families, marriages are poised to be different through thanksgiving. God desires us to be a thankful people. Yet the strain of life and the influences of this negative and immoral culture has greatly affected our obedience to this command. Where do you rate your thanksgiving today? Our thanksgiving as a church is the will of God - in everything.

Let's be thankful:

- For family - whether broken or loving - keep praying. Remember Joseph and how he struggled with his decision when family showed up. It was not simply forgiving but realizing that it was done God's way. **Genesis 50:19-20** *But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. Realize God placed you as His agent in your family for change.*
- Are you in troubling times? **James 1:2-4** Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. No matter how difficult things will get, God's Word is absolute truth and He will use all things for our good. Illness, difficulty, relationship, difficult job, loneliness, difficult life - name that situation. Give thanks!
- Thankful for the church. **I Thessalonians 1:2** *We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers.* **Ephesians 1:15-16** *For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers.* **I Corinthians 1:4** *I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus...* Give thanks for one another and for what God has done in our church. We are safe in the church.

The first Thanksgiving was not for fun. They understood that thanksgiving was the will of God. After losing so many those first few years, through the winter and drought, yet they gave thanks through it all.

**Philippians 4:6** *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* Let's become thankful people even in tough circumstances. Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving through it all. Morning will always come so be thankful to God in the night.

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How has God challenged you to stand in this down turning of our nation?

How is your thanksgiving different or the same as those first thanksgivings? What can you do to change it?

What difficulty are you facing that is hard to give thanks for?