“In Chronicles, the Levites were to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord. In the Psalms, there are some 35 references to giving thanks to God. Paul stops to give thanks as he is writing 18 times. On 10 other occasions he tells us to give thanks. In all, there are approximately 140 references in the Bible to giving thanks to God. Thankfulness is no minor principle in God’s sight. It is absolutely necessary to the practice of godliness.”

– Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*

The word “necessary” catches my attention because of Martin Luther’s belief that . . .

• Law doesn’t just mean the OT or the Mosaic Law. It means every verse in scripture approached in the wrong way.
• Gospel doesn’t just mean the NT or the message of salvation. It means every verse in the Bible approached in the right way.
• Every verse in scripture has the ability either to kill me or make me alive. It all depends on how I try to make it work.

Consider Ephesians 5:19-20 as an example.

**Observation 1:** Ephesians 5:19 consists of two illustrations

1. “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs”
   - Psalms – OT psalms
   - Hymns – Eph. 5:14
   - Spiritual songs – “snatches of spontaneous praise” (Bruce)

2. “Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord”
   - “The heart’s inner melody that keeps in tune with audible praise.”

Speaking and singing this way are illustrations, but of what?
Observation 2: Ephesians 5:20a is the key ("giving thanks"), and it is totalitarian.

1. “always”
2. “in your heart”
3. “for everything”
4. “to God the Father”

“For most of us, life is like one big Survivor episode where we are trying to convince God and everyone else why we are not the ones who should be voted off the island.”

What we all need is grace – what Luther described as Gospel. So, how do we read Paul’s totalitarian demand to be thankful as Gospel?

Observation 3: Ephesians 5:20b is the key: “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”

1. “Name” is a way of referring to what the person stands for and has accomplished.

Christians are to meet the totalitarian standard of thankfulness “on the basis of” who Jesus is and what he has done, or “in accordance” with who he is.

• Jesus lived the perfectly thankful life I couldn’t live – always, for everything, from the heart
• Jesus paid the debt for all the instances of my thanklessness I can’t pay
• When I believed, Jesus gave me the standing of a thankful person I couldn’t achieve
• Jesus sets me free to live in the thankful direction God’s holiness and love for me demands but with none of the penalty

So, it’s important to live in this direction. And the Bible tells us we should, for our own and others’ good. But don’t despair. The efforts we make in this direction are “accepted in the beloved.”

Rom. 6:1-2 – “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” And then Paul goes on to review the story of Christ.
Tit. 2:11-12 — “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.”

CONCLUSION:
Jerry Bridges is right. Thanksgiving is absolutely necessary to the practice of godliness. But the “necessity” is a Gospel necessity, not a legal one.

Ps 148
Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights above. 2 Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. 3 Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. 4 Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. 5 Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created. 6 He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away.

7 Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, 8 lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, 9 you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, 10 wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, 11 kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, 12 young men and maidens, old men and children.

13 Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens. 14 He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the people close to his heart.

Praise the Lord.