

DISPLAYING AN ATTITUDE FULL OF GRATITUDE

(Contributed in part by Matt Skiles Jan 31 2014)

Scripture 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

INTRO:

Edward Spencer was a ministerial student in Evanston, Illinois, and also a member of the life-saving squad during his school years. In 1860, a ship went aground on the shores of Lake Michigan near Evanston, and **Spencer waded again and again in to the frigid waters** to rescue seventeen passengers. In the process, his health was permanently damaged.

Some years later at his funeral, it was noted that not one of the people he rescued ever bothered to thank him.

As believers, we need to be aware that gratitude opens up our lives for God's will to be done in and through us.

I love Thanksgiving because of it reminds me to stop and express thanks!

TO STOP AND EXPRESS THANKS!

HOWEVER, gratitude is actually to be a 24-7 attitude... not just a 1-day holiday in October for Canada and in the States, it's celebrated on the 4th Thursday in November.

Being thankful is best understood, I think as a door or a "portal" through which God can lead us to experience His perfect will. And simply put, without it, we'll miss what God has in store for us. So, it's important for us to understand where gratitude and being thankful "fit in", where they belong is our lives.

A 24-7 attitude is God's desire for our lives. Where is our quality of gratitude attitude?? Do we have an attitude of gratitude???

I WANT TO LOOK AT 15 SPECIFIC AREAS IN OUR LIVES IN WHICH AND DURING WHICH WE SHOULD BE THANKFUL

1) IN OUR BLESSINGS- "Being thankful when things are going well"

"Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from Above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow"

- James 1:17

UNFORTUNATELY, the 17 passengers Edward Spencer rescued never bothered to even say “thank you” .

James 1:17 is telling us God is the source of all good things, and yet too often we don’t say “thank you” either.

FAILING TO HAVE A SENSE OF GRATITUDE IS ACTUALLY INGRATITUDE.

ILLUSTRATION:

I heard of this story quite a few years ago where a man a woman gave a serious donation to their church in honor of the memory of their son who lost his life n the Iraq war. When the announcement was made during the worship service, a woman sitting in the service whispered to her husband: “Let’s give the same amount for our boy” Her husband was upset, “What are you talking about,” he replied., “Our son wasn’t killed!” The woman looked at her husband with tear filled eyes and said, “Exactly, that’s the point! Let’s give it as an expression of our gratitude to God for sparing our son’s life.”

Expressing thanks to God for the blessings He has allowed into our lives is the ***STARTING PLACE for an ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE!*** Being thankful for God’s blessings is actually a no-brainer. Recognizing that every good thing is a gift from God, we should be thankful for them,. But an attitude of gratitude goes far beyond that alone.

2) IN OUR PRAYERS: Being thankful as we bring our requests to God.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplications (pleading humbly) with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known to God”

- Philippians 4:6

One of the keys to an effective prayer life is understanding that prayer is to be entered into with an attitude of gratitude.

In I Thessalonians 5:18 it tells us“...in everything give thanks,”, but the verse right before it tells us that we are to “pray without ceasing” – The 2 ideas are very much connected.

“Casting all your cares upon Him for he cares for you.”

- I Peter 5:7

Again, look at Philippians 4:6 and notice the 2 words that are often overlooked.
“WITH THANKSGIVING”

Oh, how we need to be thankful for the very privilege of prayer. It didn't come without a horribly high cost. Jesus shed His precious blood to allow us to come into the Presence of the Father again. What an honour and privilege that we need to be thankful for. Every prayer we pray needs to be voiced with remembrance of what Jesus did to make our relationship with the Father possible.

Of course, we are thankful for the past answers to prayer. It's good to recall how God has been faithful to us all along the way. When we do it builds our faith.. WE NEED TO BE POSSESSORS AND DISPLAYERS of an attitude of gratitude.

AND, we're to be thankful in advance for how God is going to work ALL THINGS TOGETHER for the good. We can pray with the faith and assurance that GOD'S POWER AND SOVEREIGNTY will bring about God's will. We are to be thankful that He loves us so, and that He wants to give us what is best, His good and perfect will.!

3) IN OUR WORSHIP: Being thankful as we connect with God.

“Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His Name.”

-Hebrews 13:15

“...singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God”

-Colossians 3:16

We know that worship BEGINS with a sense of Reverence toward God. But it begins being EXPRESSED from our lips in thanksgiving.

“Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing...Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His Name”

- Psalm 100:1-4

Psalm 100 was called a ***“Psalm of Ascension”***. It’s the song the Jewish people sang as they ascended (climbed) the Temple Mount. It’s the song they’d be singing as they entered through the gates of the city of Jerusalem. And then, they’d sing songs of praise as they entered into the inner courts of the temple area.

Stated plainly: Unless you have a thankful heart to God, you can’t really worship Him and before we can praise Him, there must be an attitude of gratitude in our hearts for what He’s already given us. There must be a sensed (knowing) thanksgiving for the privilege of knowing God, and being allowed to be a part of His unfolding mission on earth.

Being thankful then leads to into the more personal and heart-stretching area of praise. So, we enter His gates with thanksgiving, which leads us into His inner courts with praise.

4) IN OUR FELLOWSHIP: Being thankful for the other believers God has brought into our lives.

“We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.”

- Colossians 1:3

ILLUSTRATION:

In the early 1970's UCLA football coach Pepper Rodgers came under intense criticism and pressure from alumni and fans. Things got so bad, he remembered, with a smile, that friends became hard to find. He described it this way: *“My dog was my only true friend. I told my wife that every man needs at least two good friends...and she bought me another dog.”*

God does bring us good, Christian friends... as a free gift from His grace and goodness, and as a part of His plan for our lives. Our view of one another as fellow-believers should be one of gratitude, thanks to God for bringing each other into our lives.

5) IN OUR SUFFERING: Being thankful in every circumstance.

“Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.”

- Ephesians 5:20

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.”

-Colossians 3:15

“But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying
And singing hymns of praise to God, and the
prisoners were listening to them.”

-Acts 16:25

In our human, natural nature, we can be self-seeking, self-centered. So when things are tough, or when things don't go as we'd like them to be, we tend to complain and grumble. We get upset and even wonder why God has handed us such an unfair hand.

ILLUSTRATION :

A couple of hunters were chased up a tree by a very hungry, big bear.. One man prayed, *“O, God please make this a Christian bear.”*

To the hunters dismay, the bear bowed his head, clasped his paws together and prayer, *“Lord, I give thanks for what I'm about to receive”*

Well, prayer IS an integral art of expressing gratitude, but it's to be more than just words out of a habit or simply reciting some set of words we repeat over and over.

AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE brings about a CHANGED PERSPECTIVE in our lives. It affects how we look at, how we perceive, how we view difficult times that we encounter.

ILLUSTRATION:

A mom and dad has brought their son into the living room for a STERN discussion of the boys report card. Showing “F's” on the card, the Dad asked, *“What do you have to say about this, son?”* The son replied, *“Well you COULD be proud of me, father”*. The father, taken back, asked: *“Proud? Why would I be proud of you when you bring home a report card like this?”*

The son then answered, *“Well, one thing you know for sure, I didn't cheat”*

AND,

When Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison for preaching the Gospel, we might have expected them to feel sorry for themselves and complain about it. I mean, come on, they were unfairly beaten... all for trying to do something good. But instead, they were praying and singing hymns PRAISING GOD in their prison cell.

When Peter and John were arrested and thrown into prison, placed in the darkest of the dungeon, and threatened with their lives if they ever were to talk to Jesus again, they refused to remain silent. THEN, when they were released the following day, they thanked God for the honor of being persecuted as believers, being identified as followers of Jesus.

HOW COULD EACH OF THESE PAIRS DO IT???

How could they be thankful in the middle of what had to be their worst day/night of their lives to that point?

**THE KEY IS THAT THEY LEARNED
THE SECRET OF HAVING AN ATTITUDE
OF GRATITUDE!!!**

An attitude that isn't hindered or changed by bad circumstances.

An attitude that takes a licking and keeps on ticking.

Paul wrote the book of Philippians while he was in jail for preaching the gospel. Do you know what the theme of the book of Philippians is...**JOY** in the middle of trials.

How could he do it???? How could he be joyful while chained to a Roman Guard in the darkness of a dismal, smelly dungeon jail???

Paul explained that he learned the "secret" of being **CONTENT** in whatever circumstances he found himself.

He learned through first handed experience and a faith stretched through times of trials and testing, that being thankful, possessing a 24-7 attitude of gratitude opens up in our lives for God's will to be done in and through us, and for **GOD'S GLORY** to be shown in how we handle the difficulties.

SO, LET'S BRING IT HOME.....

Where's your GQ... gratitude quotient (your measure of response)???

Are you thankful today? In the middle of whatever circumstance you're going through?

YOU CAN BE THANKFUL. Phillippians 4:13 is penned immediately **AFTER** Paul has explained his learning the secret of being content in whatever circumstance he found himself, therefore he stated,

" I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME."

In other words, I'm confident God will bring me through and bring me to victory, regardless of what things look like at the moment.

Are you practicing I Thessalonians 5:18...

**“IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS, FOR THIS I THE WILL OF GOD
IN CHRIST JESUS CONCERNING YOU”**

If so, I invite you to take time right now and thank God afresh.

If you struggle because gratitude is not a 24-7 attitude in your life, I encourage you and invite you to pray right now and ask God to help you to change your perspective, to stir up within your heart what He wants to bring to you... *AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE!!!*

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5_17.18.wpd

Date: Oct 8/23

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: Give Thanks (with a Grateful Heart)