

INGRATITUDE DEFINED & REWARDED

November 17, 2019

Romans 1:18-32

“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

I Thessalonians 5:18

Thanksgiving is the byproduct of sanctified God-consciousness. It is an inevitable consequence in the regenerated soul who has gained understanding of who God is, of what God has done, and especially, of what He has done personally for that soul. It is the saved soul's reflex when thoughts return to God and to the favor He has shown.

Romans one describes the plunge of wicked men and women, and of human society, toward damnation. Step by step, it journals their plummet unto sinful destruction as they sink beneath the wrath of God. This is one of their indictments: “when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (21).

INGRATITUDE DEFINED: “When they knew God, they glorified him not as God.” In what way had they known God? In this: God had revealed Himself to them. “That which may be known of God is manifest in them: for God hath shewed it unto them” (19).

God has revealed Himself in nature, apart from Scripture. Creation declares God's glory (Psalm 19:1). His wisdom, power, creativity and vast dominion over all matter, all life, all information, yea, over all; is demonstrated in His creation. Creation exhibits “his eternal power and Godhead,” leaving men without any excuse for not knowing God (Rom. 1:20).

Within creation, God has revealed Himself in human conscience. That inner moral code with which every conscious person is born testifies of an author who programmed the conscience according to His own standard of morality. Thus the passage continues to describe heathen people who “do by nature the things contained in the law . . . which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness” (2:14, 15).

Ingratitude is simply ignoring God who has revealed Himself so powerfully. Whether we look outside to creation or inside to our conscience, God is revealed. To live as if He is not, mindless of His being, is the ingratitude that indicts the wicked. But the God-conscious believer, returning countless times daily to think on what God has done for him, will “in everything give thanks.” This counsels us to remember continually the works of God, to “forget not all his benefits” (Psalm 103:2).

INGRATITUDE REWARDED: Those who were unthankful “became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (1:21, 22). By suppressing the testimony of creation and of conscience--they “hold [down] the truth in unrighteousness (1:18)—the unbeliever quenches the spring and fountain-head of understanding, opting instead for folly. But it is worse than this. Their foolish heart is darkened. This describes a power from outside themselves that delivers them over unto darkening of understanding, of conscience and of reasoning. Thus delivered, they continue to plummet unto destruction, without conscience or understanding that they are under God's wrath.